Unseen samurai under the thumb of a power-hungry woman; a beggar ronin seeking the downfall of his greedily ambitious wife; a woman driven to the depths of insanity by the murder of her child; the horribly burned husband seeking revenge; a good-for-nothing transient willing to use a child to make easy money; a lady magician threatened by swindling gangsters: all of these people have something in common — the need to regain their honor, and in feudal Japan, this quest almost always means death. As Ogami Itto, a wandering assassin on a road to vengeance, crosses paths with each of these tragic souls, they learn there is nothing left in this world except honor, vengeance, death, and blood.

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KAZUO KOIKE & GOSEKI KOJIMA

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STUDIO PROTEUS

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VOLUME 12

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VOLUME 12

SHATTERED STONES

By KAZUO KOIKE & GOSEKI KOJIMA

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DANA LEWIS

lettering & retouch
DIGITAL CHAMELEON

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SHATTERED STONES

子連れ狼

By KAZUO KOIKE

& GOSEKI KOJIMA

VOLUME

12

A NOTE TO READERS

Lone Wolf and Cub is famous for its carefully researched re-creation of Edo-Period Japan. To preserve the flavor of the work, we have chosen to retain many Edo-Period terms that have no direct equivalents in English. Japanese is written in a mix of Chinese ideograms and a syllabic writing system, resulting in numerous synonyms. In the glossary, you may encounter words with multiple meanings. These are words written with Chinese ideograms that are pronounced the same but carry different meanings. A Japanese reader seeing the different ideograms would know instantly which meaning it is, but these synonyms can cause confusion when Japanese is spelled out in our alphabet. *O-yurushi o* (please forgive us)!

LONE WOLF AND CUB

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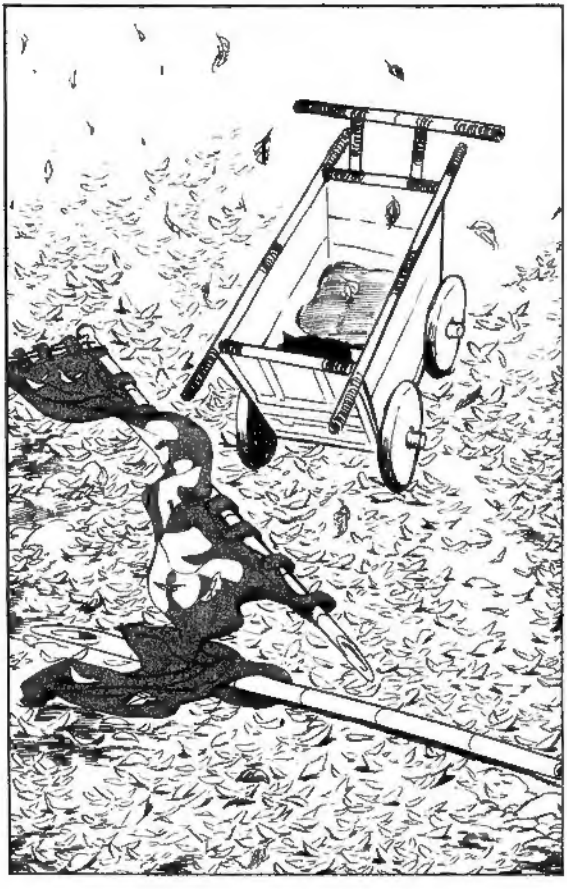
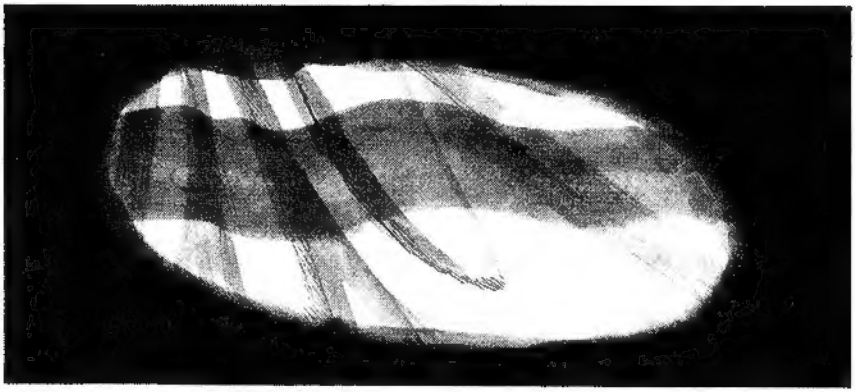
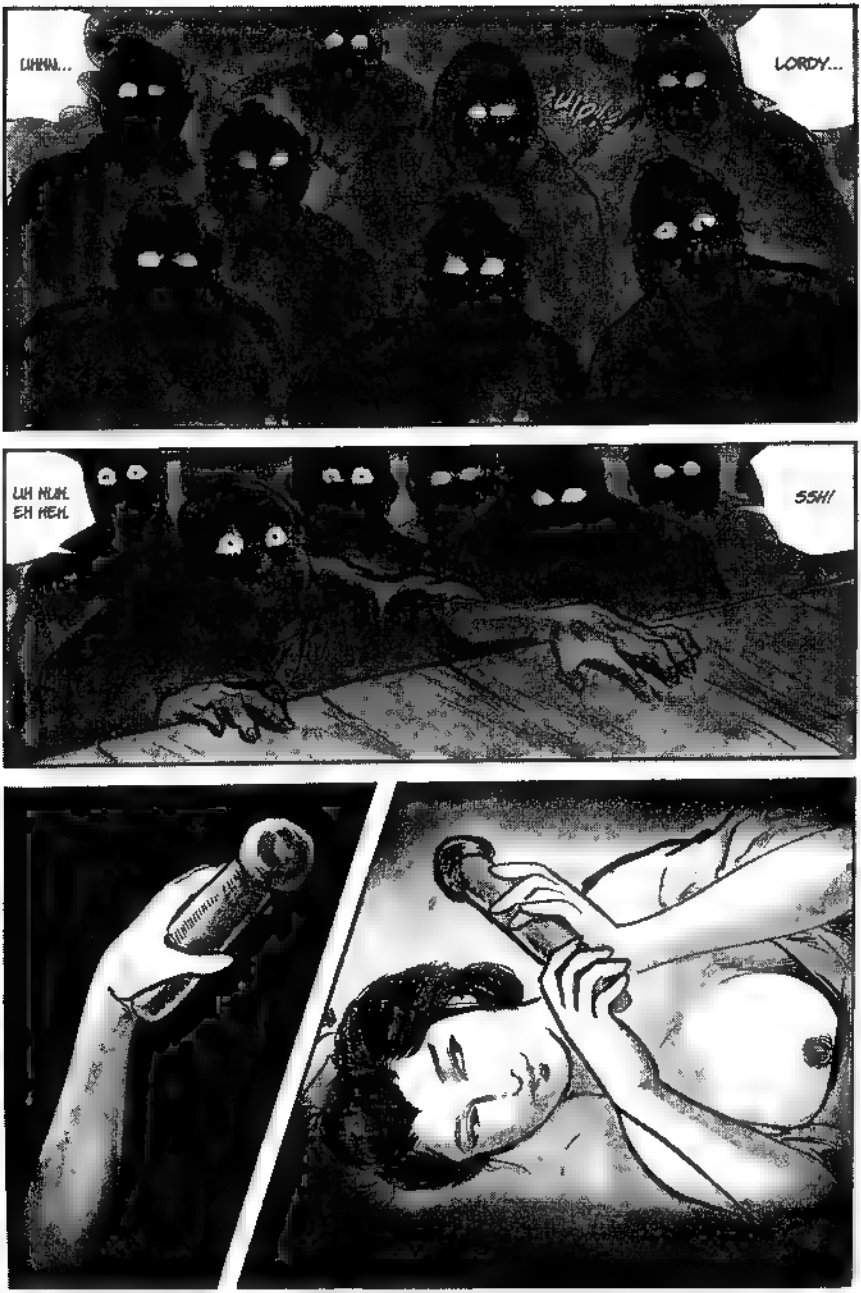
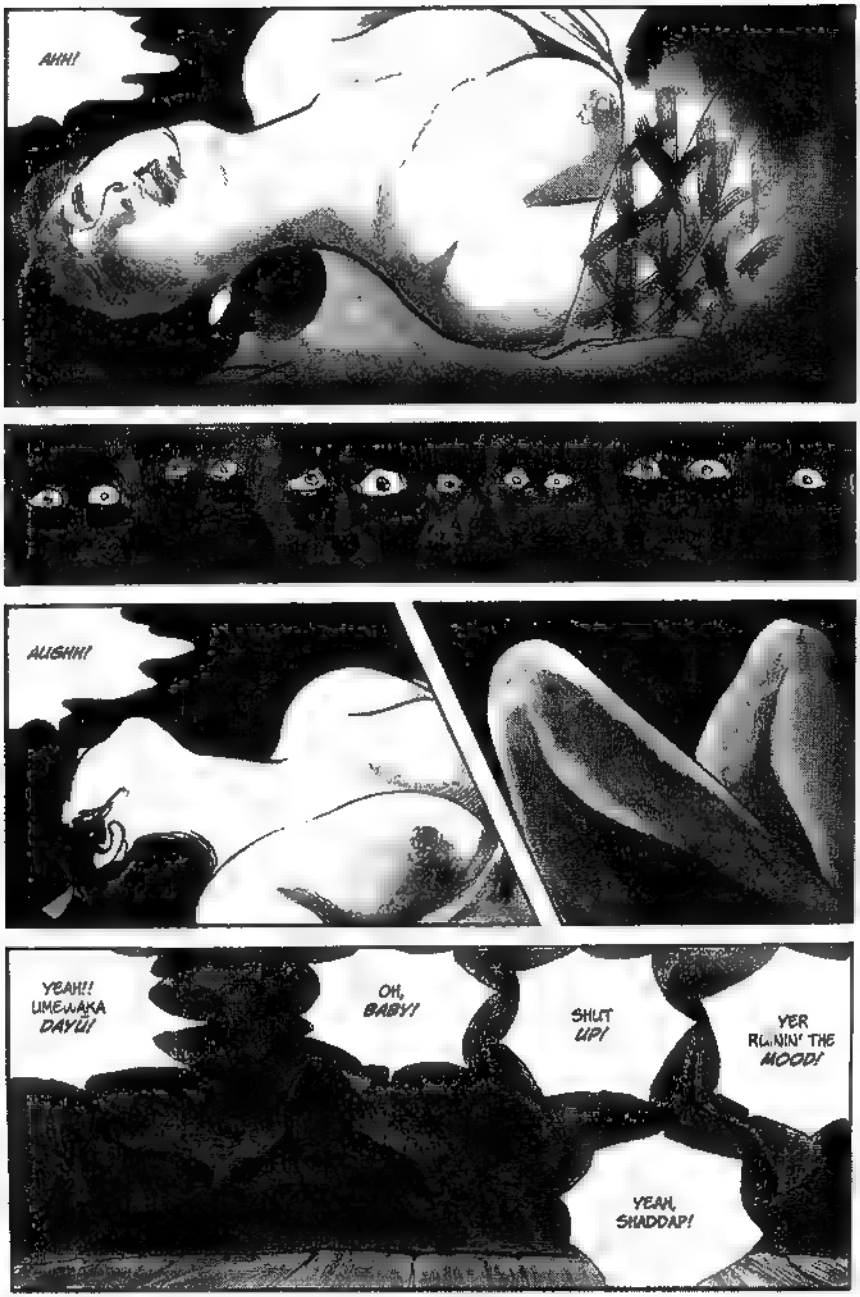
the fifty-ninth

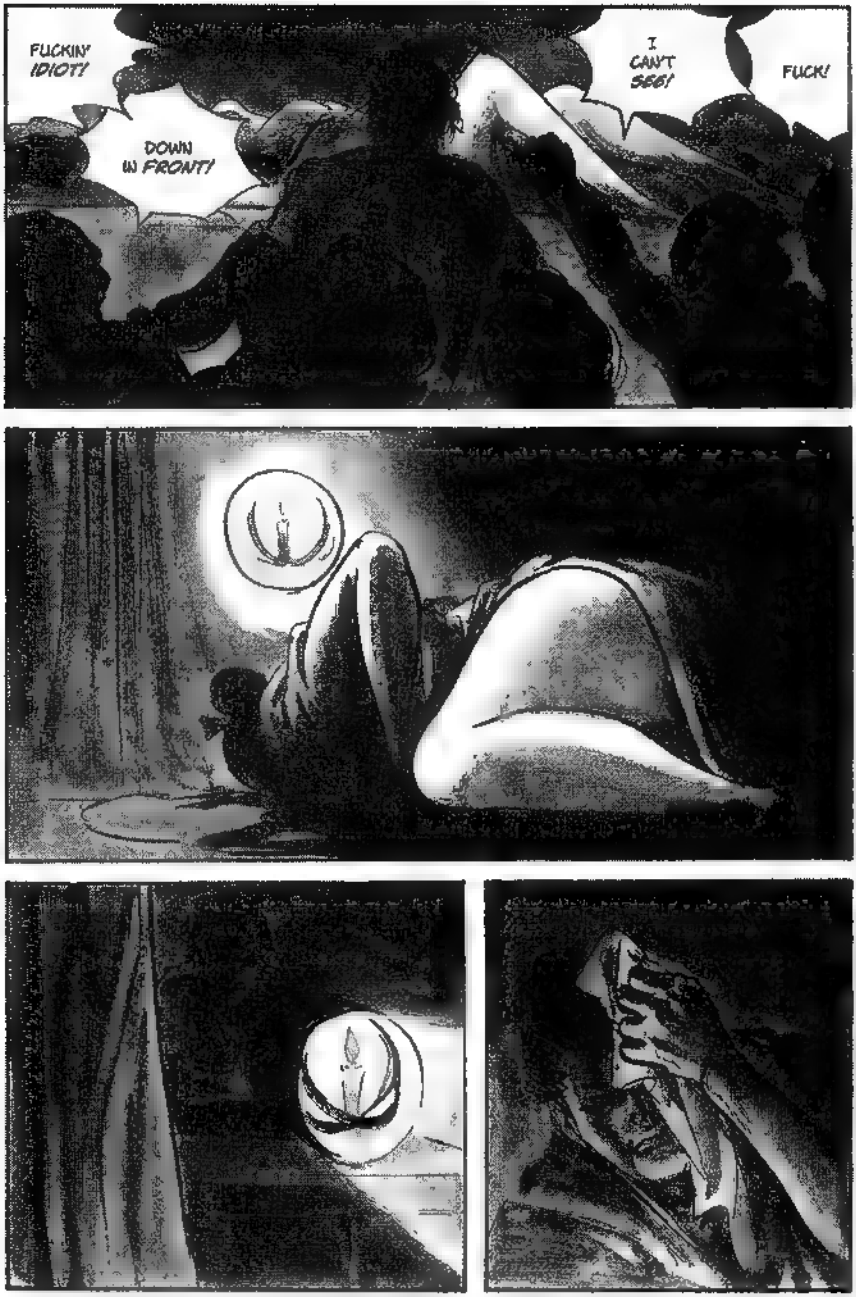


Nameless, Penniless, Lifeless




UHHH...
LORDY...
SLURP!
UH HUH. EH HEH.
SSH!

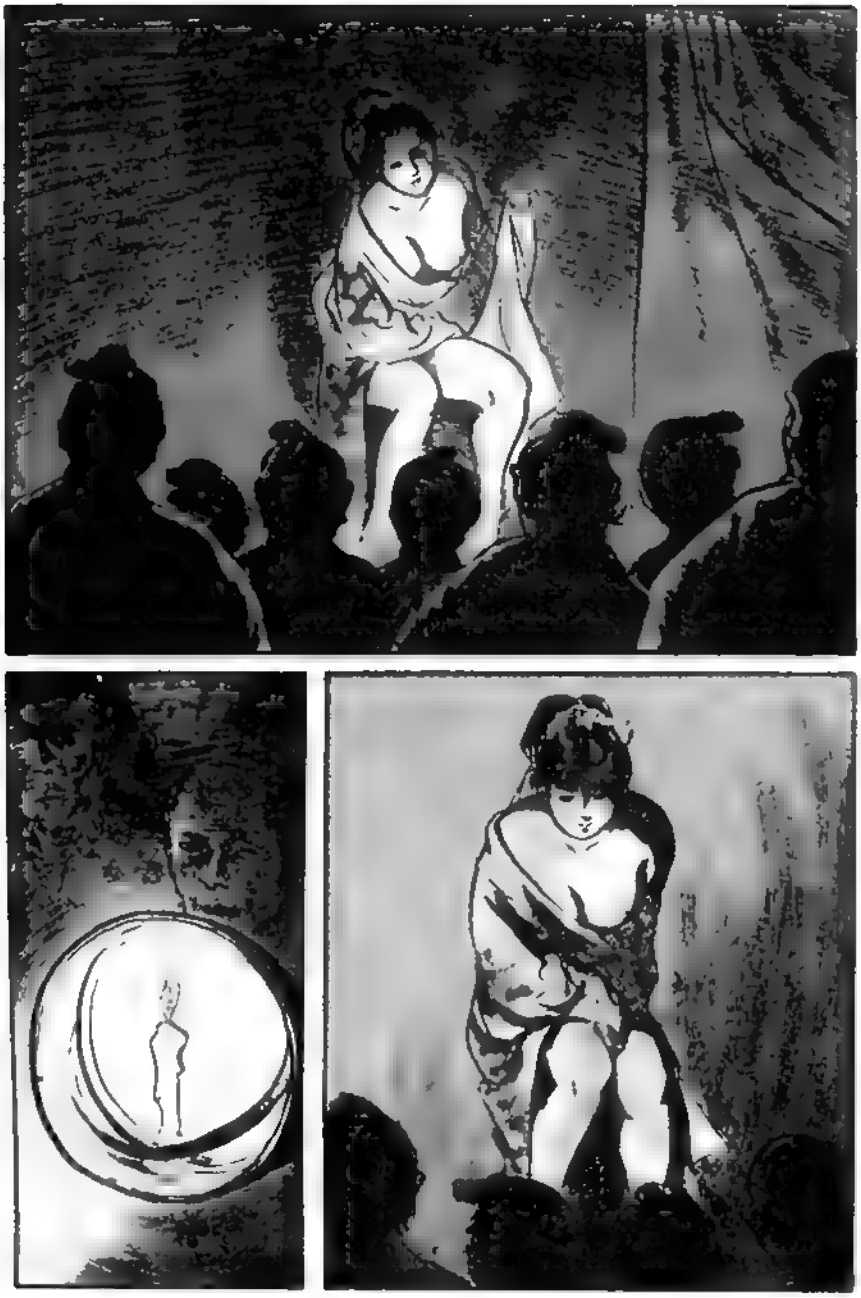

AHH!
AUGHH!
YEAH!! UMEWAKA DAYU!
OH, BABY!
SHUT UP!
YER RUININ' THE MOOD!
YEAH, SHADDAP!

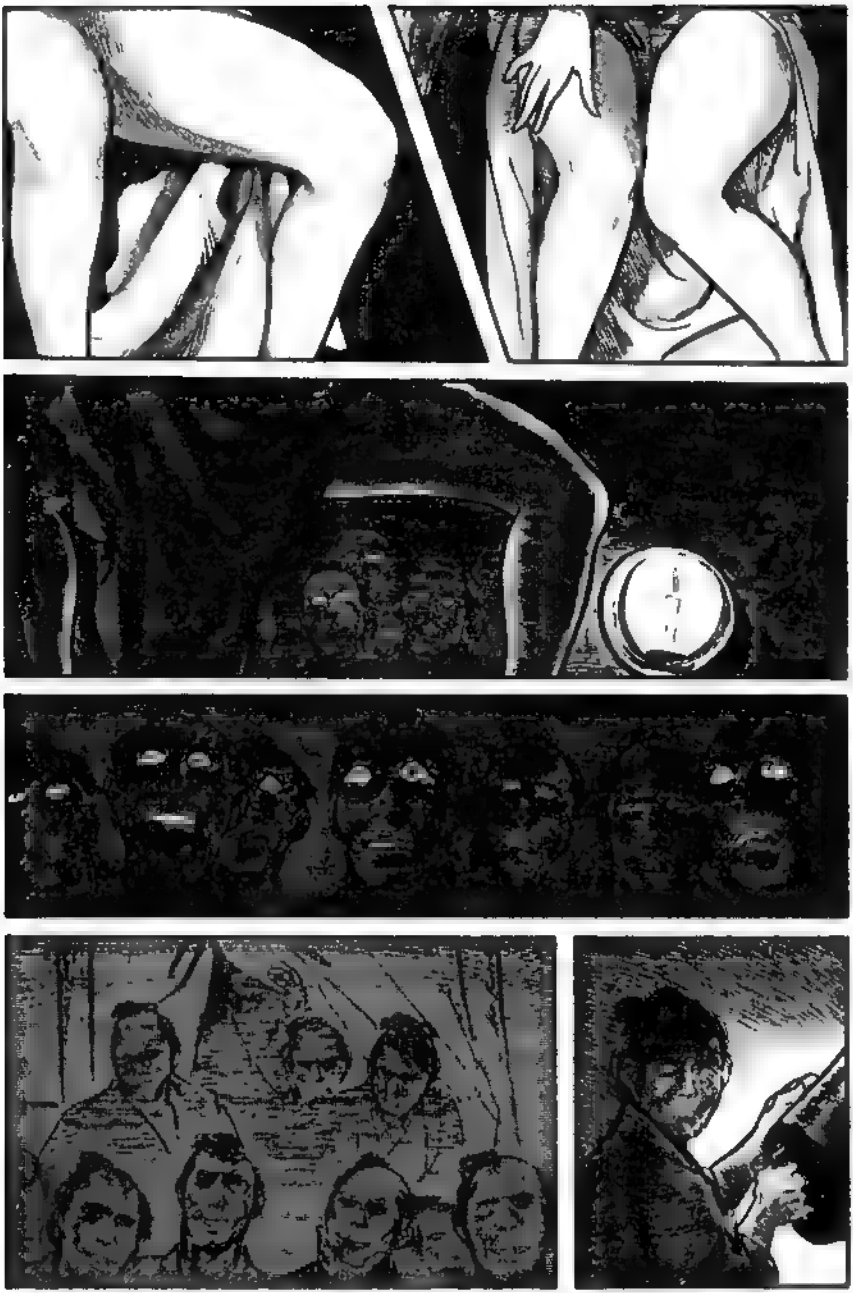

FUCKIN' IDIOT!
DOWN IN FRONT!
I CAN'T SEE!
FUCK!

"WARNING DAYS
IN A FORBIDDEN
ZONE"

YO!
DARLY
SHOW
US MONEY
ALL
RIGHTY

SPREAD IT!
I CAN'T STAND IT!
FUCK! OH FUCK!





HEH HEH HEH. NOT A BAD PIECE, HUH?
I LIKE WHAT'S BETWEEN THEM LEGS.
HEH HEH HEH!
ALL RIGHT!
HEY, SHUDDUP BACK THERE!
YEOWW!!

EEEK!!
AH...!
WHAT TH—?!
WHOA!!

WE'RE THE TENSHIN IKKA! EVERYONE CALM DOWN!
IT'S OKAY DON'T BE AFRAID.

THERE, THERE, O-UHE. I'M WITH YOU.
IT'S OKAY...
RIGHT THEA!
ALL YA CUSTOMERS, GIT ON HOME.
COME ON! GET OUT!
MOVE YOUR ASSES!

YOU RUN THIS TROUPE?
THOUGH I GUESS IT'S JUST THE TWO OF YA, HUH...
YASSIR! JUST ME AND UMEWAKA DAYŪ
SHIT! YOU HEAR THAT? A DAYŪ...?!
THERE'S NO ART IN SPREADIN' IT, MAN! MY "DAYŪ" BORES RIGHT IN!
HAH HAH HAW HAW
HEH HEH HA HA HA
YER ON TENSHIN IKKA TURF, PAL.
IF YA SET UP HERE KNOWIN' THAT, YOU'RE GONNA PAY!
I'M TERRIBLY SORRY.
WHY DIDN'T YA COME PAY YER RESPECTS ...?!
YASSIR, OUR PRODUCTION BEING WHAT IT IS, SIR, I FEARED THE HONORED HOUSE OF TENSHIN MIGHT SUFFER FROM ASSOCIATION, SIR. THAT'S WHY I DIDN'T CALL, SIR, YASSIR.

HRM. MAKES SENSE...
BUT YOU GOTTA LOT OF MARKS COMIN' IN, EVEN FOR CRAP LIKE THIS WE CAN'T JUST TURN A BLIND EYE ON IT, SEE?
AND IF SOMEONE GETS THE WRONG IDEA, WE GOTTA CLEAN UP THE MESS. 'CUZ IT'S OUR TURF, SEE?
BUT YER RIGHT, THERE. WE CAN'T TAKE A CUT OFF A NASTY BIT OF FILTH LIKE THIS BAD FOR OUR REP.
WHAT SHOULD WE DO, SIR?
HEH, HEH, HEH. GOOD QUESTION
MAYBE WE CAN USE YA LIKE ENTERTAINMENT, SEE? BETWEEN ROUNDS OF THE DICE, MAYBE.
THE AUTUMN FESTIVAL STARTS TOMORROW, AND WE'RE RUNNING A GAMING HOUSE THROUGH THE WHOLE SHOW. FOR THE LOCAL OYABUN AND PATRONS, SEE?
I WANT YA TO WORK THE STAGE DURING DRINK TIME. A SIGHT FOR SORE EYES, RIGHT? CAN'T PAY YA, BUT I'LL SEE YA GET SOME GRUB.
YASSIR!

SEVEN DAYS, STARTING TOMORROW... AND YER OFF THE HOOK.
YASSIR, THANK YOU VERY MUCH, SIR.
THAT YOUR OLD LADY?
YASSIR!
A LITTLE SOFT IN THE NOGGIN, IS SHE?
YASSIR... POOR THING.
YER PRETTY NUTS YERSELF "YASSIR" THIS, "YASSIR" THAT YA SOUND LIKE A HICK, BUT. .
YASSIR, SORRY, SIR.
HA-HA-HA-HA-HA!
YASSIR, YASSIR, WHATEVER YA WANT, SIR! LIKE POUNDIN' A NAIL INTO A GOURD—THERE AIN'T NO THERE THERE.
HAH, HAH!
EH HEH HEH!

SPEAKING OF HAMMERING. I FORGOT ONE THING.
I'M PUTTING THIS SHOW ON FOR THE BOSSES AND OUR PATRONS, RIGHT?
CAN'T PUT MY REP ON THE LINE WITHOUT TESTING OUT THE SHOW FIRST. CAN I? HEH HEH HEH.
THAT OKAY BY YOU, PAL?
Y YASSIR.

THERE, THERE. IT'S NOTHING. NOTHING AT ALL.
IT'S OKAY...
I HAVE ONE REQUEST, SIR.
YEAH? WHAT?
SHE GETS FRIGHTENED REALLY EASY, SIR.
IT'S BETTER TO DO IT ON STAGE, LIKE SHE'S USED TO.
HEH HEH. NO PROBLEM.
I'LL GO EASY ON HER. SHE'S OUR STAR TOMORROW, RIGHT?

HERE, LIKE. UP HERE...
THERE, THERE.
THAT'S RIGHT. JUST LIKE ALWAYS. IT'S OKAY.
NOW..WE'LL START LIKE WE ALWAYS DO.

KLAP KLAP KLAP KLAP KLAP KLAP
YES! UHEWAKA DAYU! CURTAIN! LET THE SHOW BEGIN!

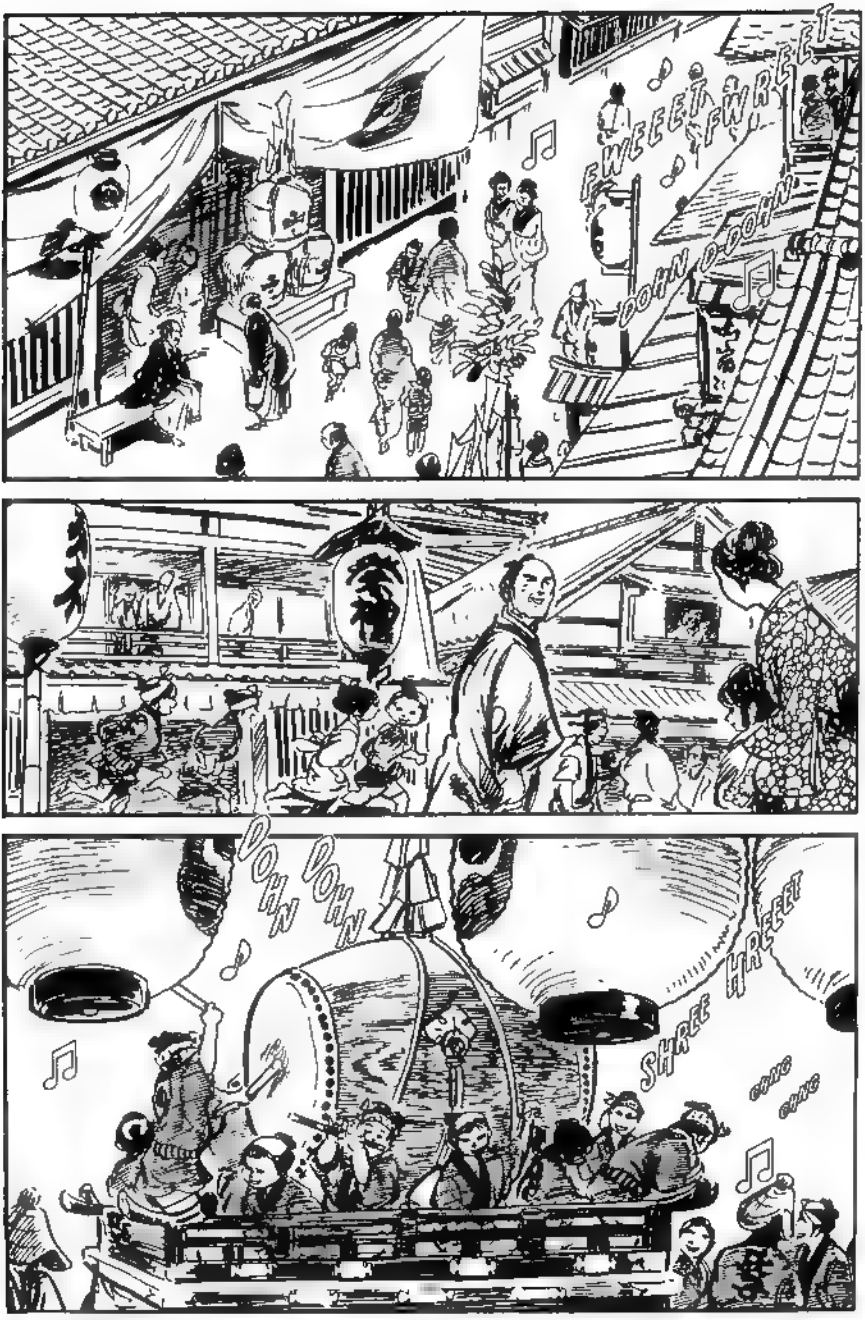
YO!! UMEWAKA DAYU!! YOU'RE GREAT!
I CAN'T TAKE IT NO MORE!
KLAP KLAP
YES! WAY TO GO!
FRIGGIN' FREAKS! THE WIFE'S A SICKO...
...AND HER HUBBY'S EVEN SICKER!

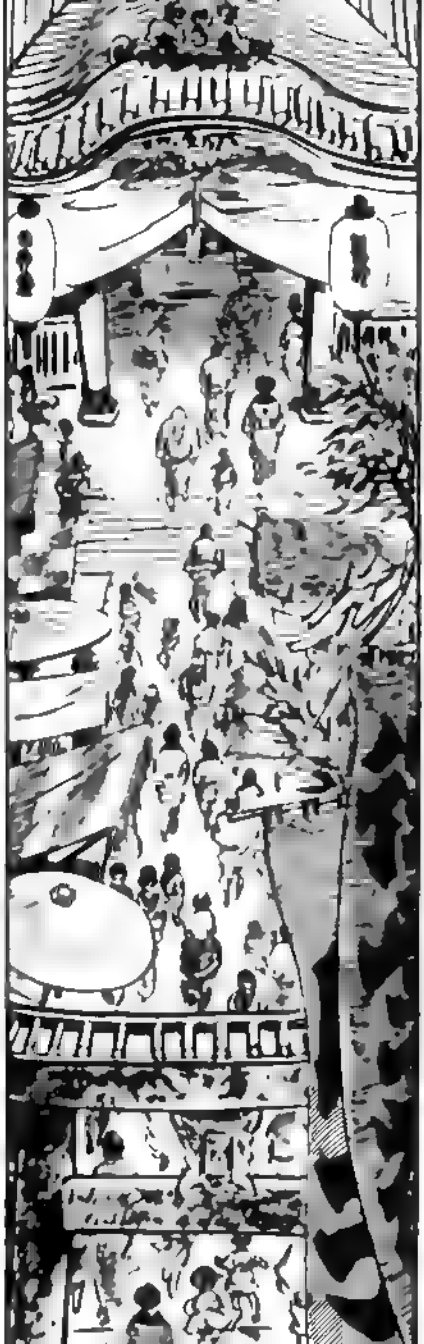
YEAH! GO FOR IT! DO IT!
UMEWAKA DAYÜ! MAGNIFI-CENT!
KLAP
KLAP
SHIT! HOW MUCH LONGER?
SHE'S READY NOW... YASSIR.

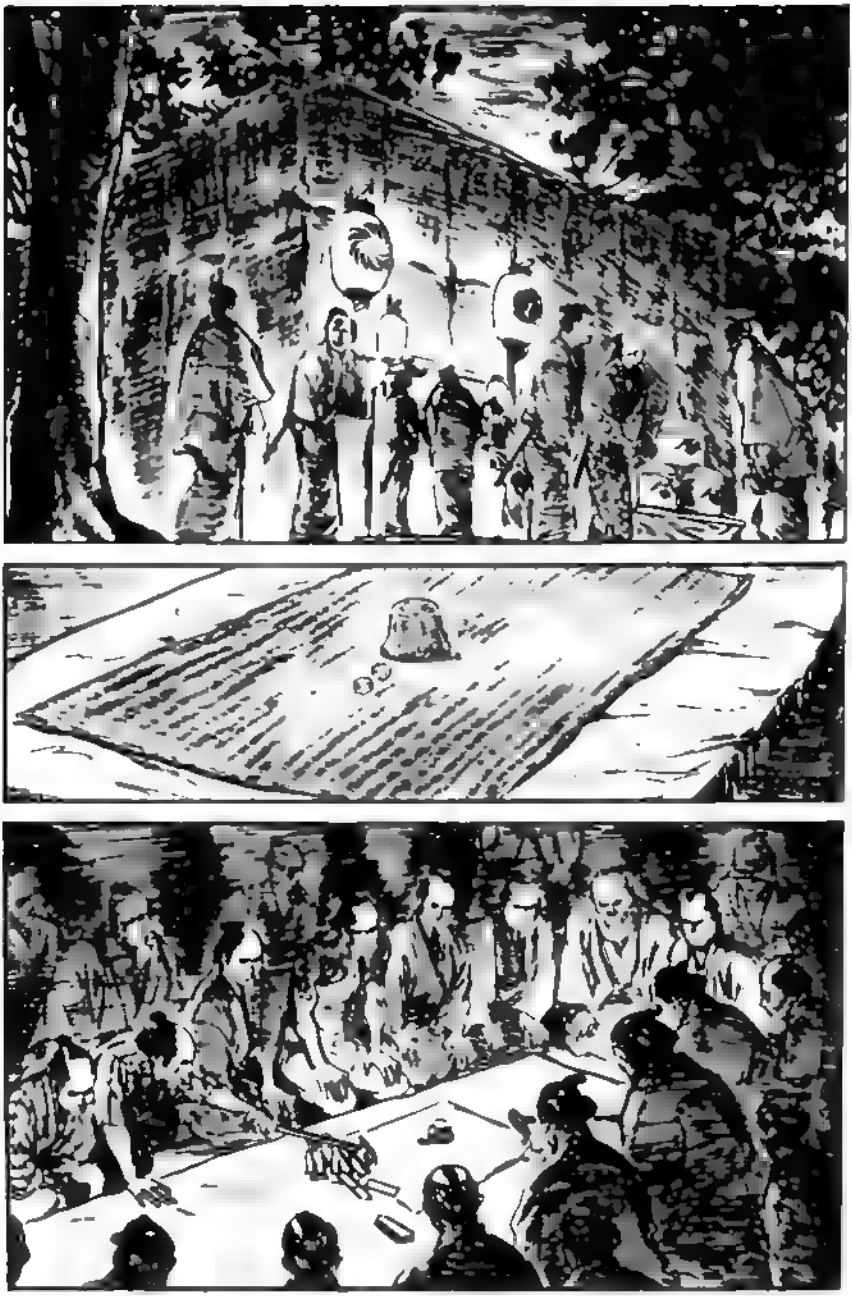
AH?!

EEYAHH!
AAHH ...!
NN..AHH! MORE! MORE!
H- HARDER! DARLING!! MORE!!

AUUH..!
AHHH
C-CAN'T TAKE THIS..
WHOA

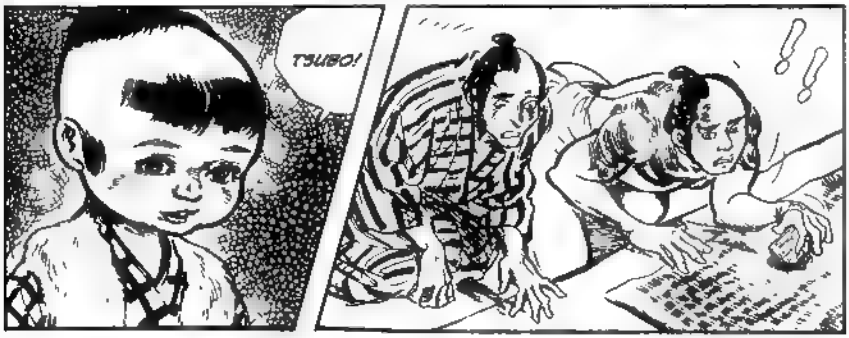

FWEEEE! FWREE!
DOHN-DOHN
DOHN DOHN
SHREE HREEE!
OMMO
OMMO

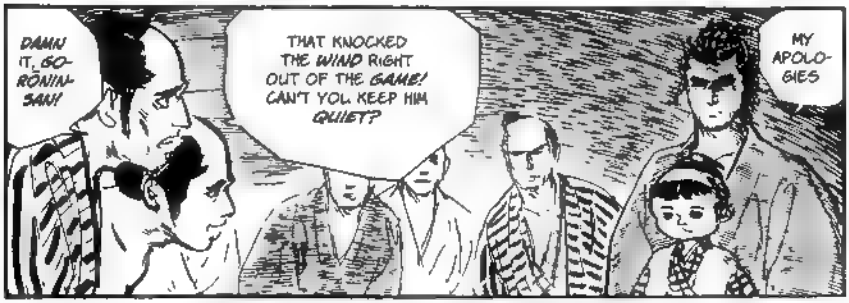




TSUBO!
CHNK
THOK
BETS!
WHAT WILL IT BE?!

CHO!
CHO!
HAN!
HAVE WE A HANJI WE NEED A HAN!
GOING! GOING! HAVE WE A HANJI
A BOY IN THE LAP, A BET IN THE HAND
BUT BOY CAN A SAMURAI HAND IN HIS BETS?
CHO AND HAN- ALL BETS ARE CAST!


TSUBO!
!!

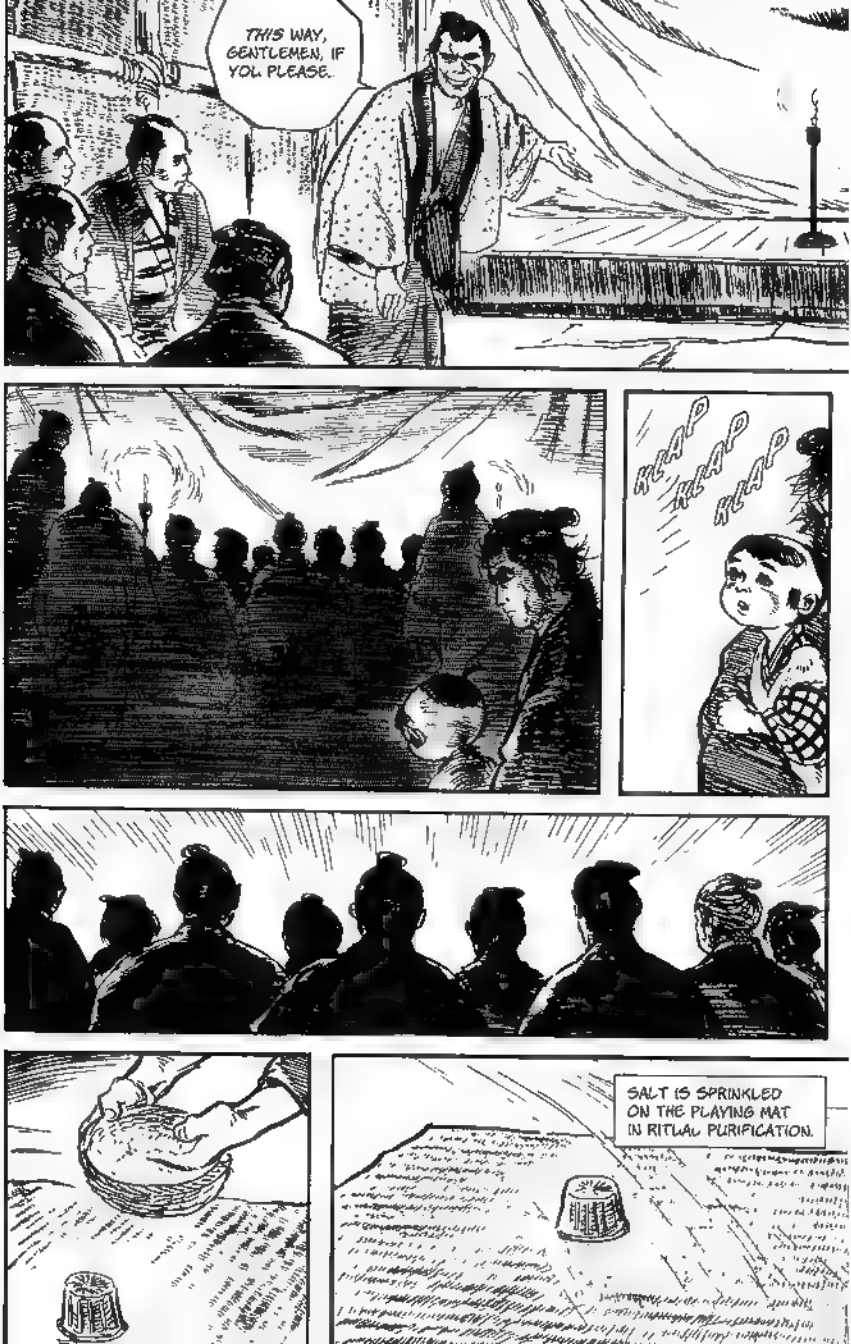

DAMN IT, GO-RŌNIN-SAN!
THAT KNOCKED THE WIND RIGHT OUT OF THE GAME! CAN'T YOU KEEP HIM QUIET?
MY APOLOGIES

AND THAT'S NOT ALL. YOU'VE BEEN WATCHING AND WATCHING, BUT YOU'VE NEVER PUT DOWN A CHIP.
IF YOU'RE SAVING YOUR CHIPS FOR THE AFTERLIFE, MOVE ASIDE SO FOLK CAN PLAY IN THIS ONE.

IF YOU NEED TO WIN SOME DINNER MONEY, TAKE THIS
TAK
CALL IT A PRESENT FOR THE BOY
HEY I GOT A HAIKU! HE PLACES A BET UNDER THE COLD AUTUMN SKIES– TWO EMPTY STOMACHS!
HAW HAW HAW!
EH HEH HEH!
IS IT CUSTOM THAT YOU USE THESE CHIPS IN EACH ROUND TO KEEP YOUR PLACE?
NAW, IT AIN'T THAT STRICT BUT IF YOU JUST HOARD YOUR PIECES, THAN WE NEVER GET THE BIG GO-FOR-BROKE PLAY, IF YA SEE WHAT I MEAN?

FWDD
SHAKK

G-GOTTA BE FIVE HUNDRED RYŌ EASY
LORDY
YOU IDIOTS!
IS THAT ANY WAY TO TREAT AN HONORED GUEST?
EXCUSE THEM, SIR. I'M AFRAID THEY'VE OFFENDED YOU DEEPLY TENSHIN-NO-RYUZŌ. AT YOUR SERVICE. PLAY TO YOUR HEART'S CONTENT, HEE HEE !
. . . .
. . . .
GENTLEMEN! IT SEEMS WE COULD ALL USE A BREAK ABOUT NOW. WHILE MY MEN PURIFY THE DICE BOARDS.
FEAST YOUR EYES, HEE HEE, ON AN EDIFYING DEMONSTRATION OF THE LATEST IN WOMANLY ARTS.


THIS WAY, GENTLEMEN, IF YOU PLEASE..
KLAP KLAP KLAP
SALT IS SPRINKLED ON THE PLAYING MAT IN RITUAL PURIFICATION.

CHUKK
FWHIP
AHH!
STOP THE SHOW!
WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?!

YES, IT'S BEEN A WHILE, RYUZŌ
OH, SORRY YOU'RE TENSHIN-NO-RYUZŌ NOW— THE BIG OYABUN
BUT I GUESS.
YOU WOULDN'T REMEMBER ME NOT WITH THESE BURNS!
YOU'RE. YOU'RE.
DONBURI-NO-TATSUJI!
HEY, YOU DO REMEMBER. YEAH, THAT'S ME. DONBURI THE DRUNKARD TO YOU.
AND MAYBE YOU REMEMBER SOMETHING ELSE LIKE THAT STINKING TRICK YOU PULLED SEVEN YEARS AGO!
GETTING ME BLIND DRUNK

KIDNAPPING MY BABY BOY, RAPING MY WIFE, AND STEALING OUR RADIO! BYO IN SAMAR!
THEN YOU TORCHED OUR HOUSE . . . FOR THE EVIDENCE!

FIGURED YOU COULD BLAME ALL ON WANDERING ROBBERS, DIDN'T YOU ?
THEN... THEN SHE'S...!
RIGHT, RYUZO! MY WIFE THE WOMAN YOU COVETED!
YOU CAN'T SAY YOU FORGOT THIS FACE!
AH. AHH!
HEH. SO IT WAS YOU, AFTER ALL.
WH-WHAT?!
WHEN I DRAGGED POOR O-LIME OUT OF THE FIRE, HER MIND WAS GONE SHE NEVER RECOVERED
BUT I DIDN'T HAVE PROOF IT WAS YOU! SO I TOOK THIS LITTLE PLAY ON THE ROAD.

I WANT YOUR LIFE, RYŪZŌ!
K-KILL HIM!!
WHOA!
WOW!
HEEK!

SHRRK!
SHRK!
HRGK!
NGFF!
HRFF!
SHUKK
BASTARD!
CHUNK
NGH!
SHRRKK
GRUH!

ALIGH!
URNG..!
GHKK ...!
DIE!!
FUCKER!

uhg
ahh!
NO!!
COME BACK HERE!!
N-NO! PLEASE!

SPARE ME!!
I WAS BAD! I'M SORRY! I'LL PAY YOU!
I DON'T WANT MONEY!
TAKE MY TURF! ANYTHING!
I DON'T WANT ANY OF IT!
I I WAS IN DEBT! I OWED GAMBLERS! I WAS DESPERATE!

I DON'T CARE!
COME ON, DONBURI! ALL MY TURF, OKAY? MY MONEY! EVERYTHING, FOR YOU!
I'M BEGGING YOU.
RYŪZŌ... ALL I WANT IS YOUR STINKING LIFE! DO YOU KNOW WHAT WE'VE BEEN THROUGH THESE SEVEN YEARS, HUNTING FOR YOU .? A LIVING HELL!
PUTTING MY WIFE IN FRONT OF STRANGERS. .
ALL TO FIND YOU, YOU AND THAT DAMN SCAR ON YOUR BELLY..
..THE ONLY HAPPINESS WE HAD LEFT WAS DEATH!

THINK OF THAT YOU BASTARD!
AND WE COULDN'T EVEN SHIT NOT UNTIL WE FOUND YOU!
THIS FUCKING HAND I'VE LIVE WITH!
WHEN ALL YOU'VE DONE IS HATE.
NO NO
AY-AHH!!

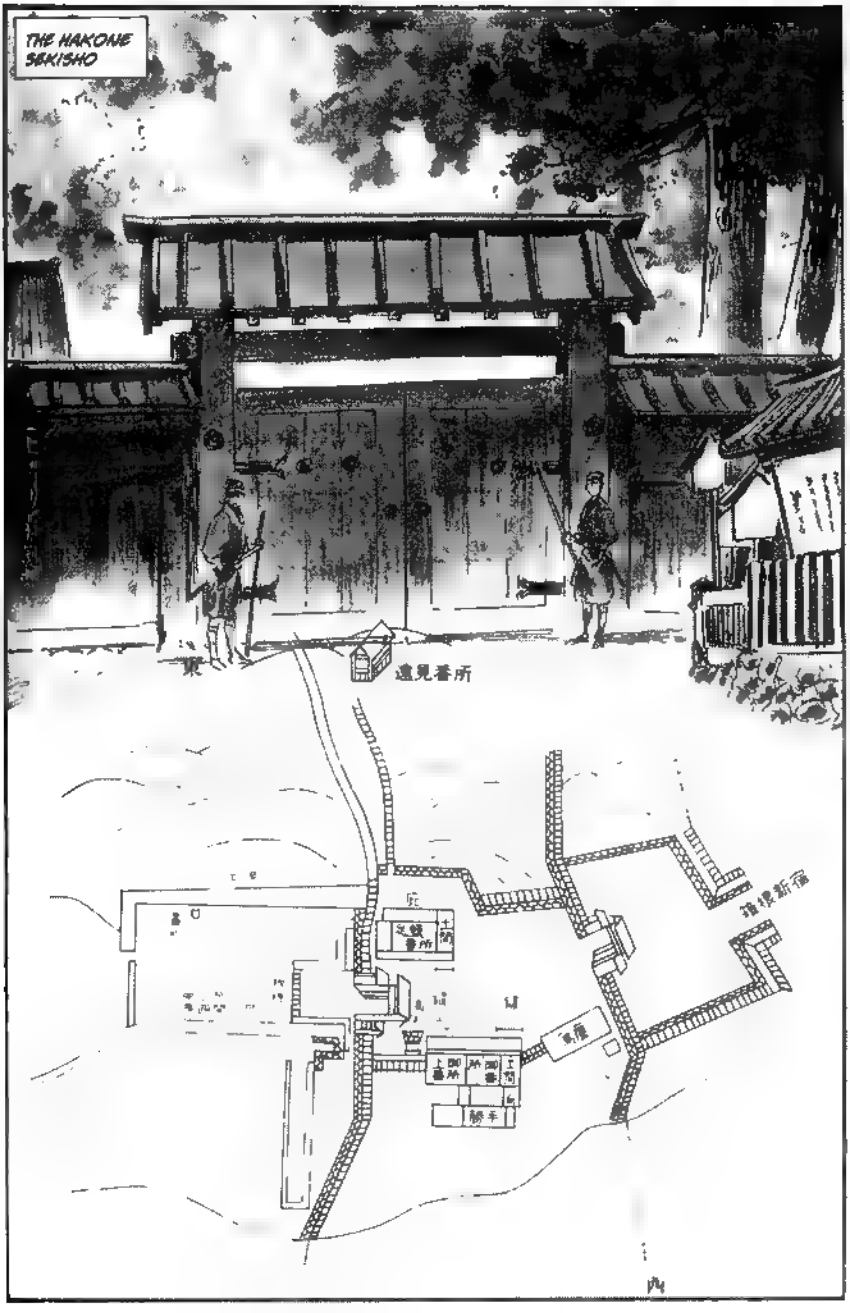
O-LIME! NOW.. NOW...
WE CAN FINALLY DIE...

WE'RE READY, SIR.
HRM.
O-UME...
IT'S OVER, MY LOVE. WE CAN DIE TOGETHER, NOW.
LIKE THIS, DARLING.. HOLDING EACH OTHER TIGHT...
WE'LL BE IN A BETTER PLACE SOON. YOU, AND ME, AND LITTLE MATSUO, JUST THE THREE OF US..
WHSSS

NAMELESS, PENNILESS LIFELESS.
SEEKING NOTHING MORE THAN DEATH NOTHING MORE THAN WE SEEK FOR OURSELVES.

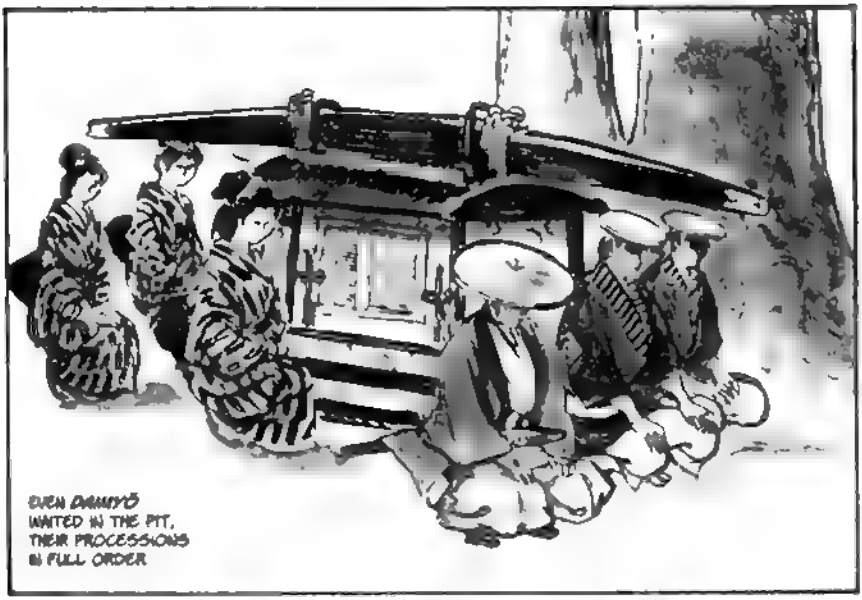
the sixtieth

Body Check


THE HAKONE SEKISHO
東
遠見番所
関所
番所
馬屋
内

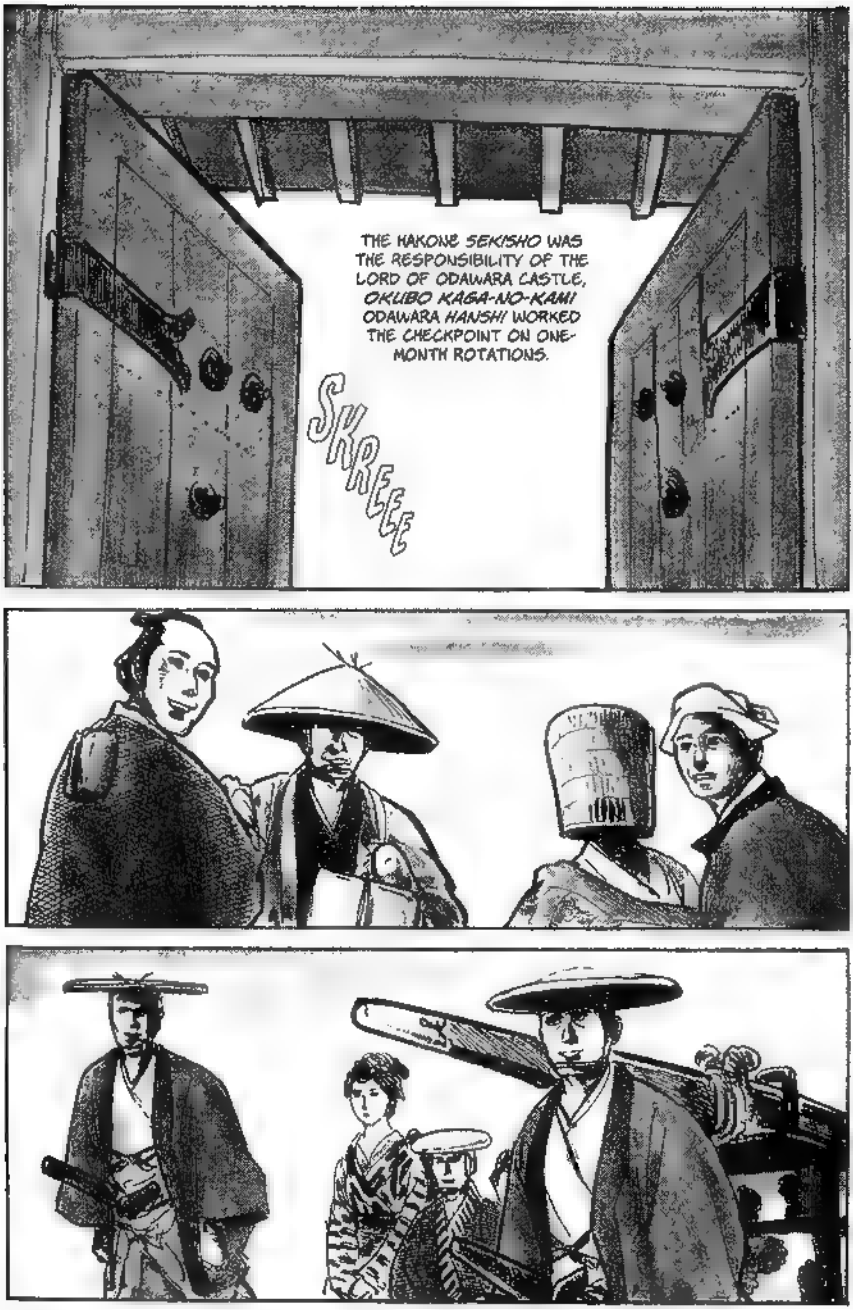
THE HAKONE SEKISHO.
BACKED BY MOUNT BYŌBU TO THE NORTHEAST, FACING LAKE ASHINOKO TO THE SOUTHWEST.
ASTRIDE THE CREST OF THE PASS AT HAKONE HACHIRI, THIS CRITICAL CHECKPOINT CONTROLLED THE MAIN ROUTE FROM EDO TO KYOTO AND OSAKA IN THE SOUTH
OPENED AT 8
A.M. SHARP

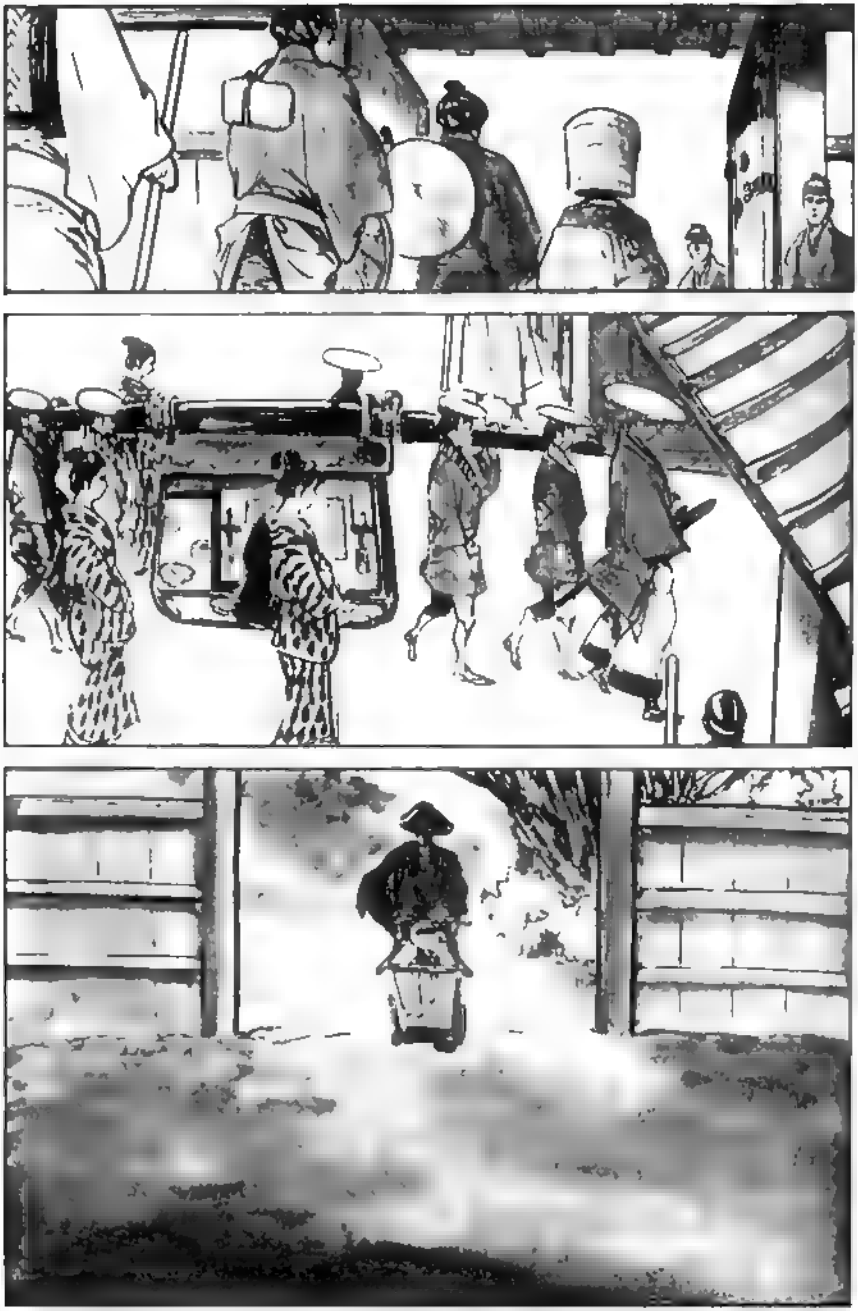
TRAVELERS, BOTH SOUTHBOUND OR EN ROUTE TO THE CAPITAL, WAITED FOR THE OPENING OF THE GATES IN THE BROAD PLAZA BEFORE THE ENTRANCE, POPULARLY KNOWN AS SENNIN-DAME, THE THOUSAND-PERSON PIT


EVEN DAIMYŌ
WAITED IN THE PIT,
THEIR PROCESSIONS
IN FULL ORDER

BRRR! IT'S FREEZIN'-- OPEN THE DURN GATE!
ANY MINUTE NOW
COLD OR NOT, I GOTTA TAKE ME A PISS

BRRR!

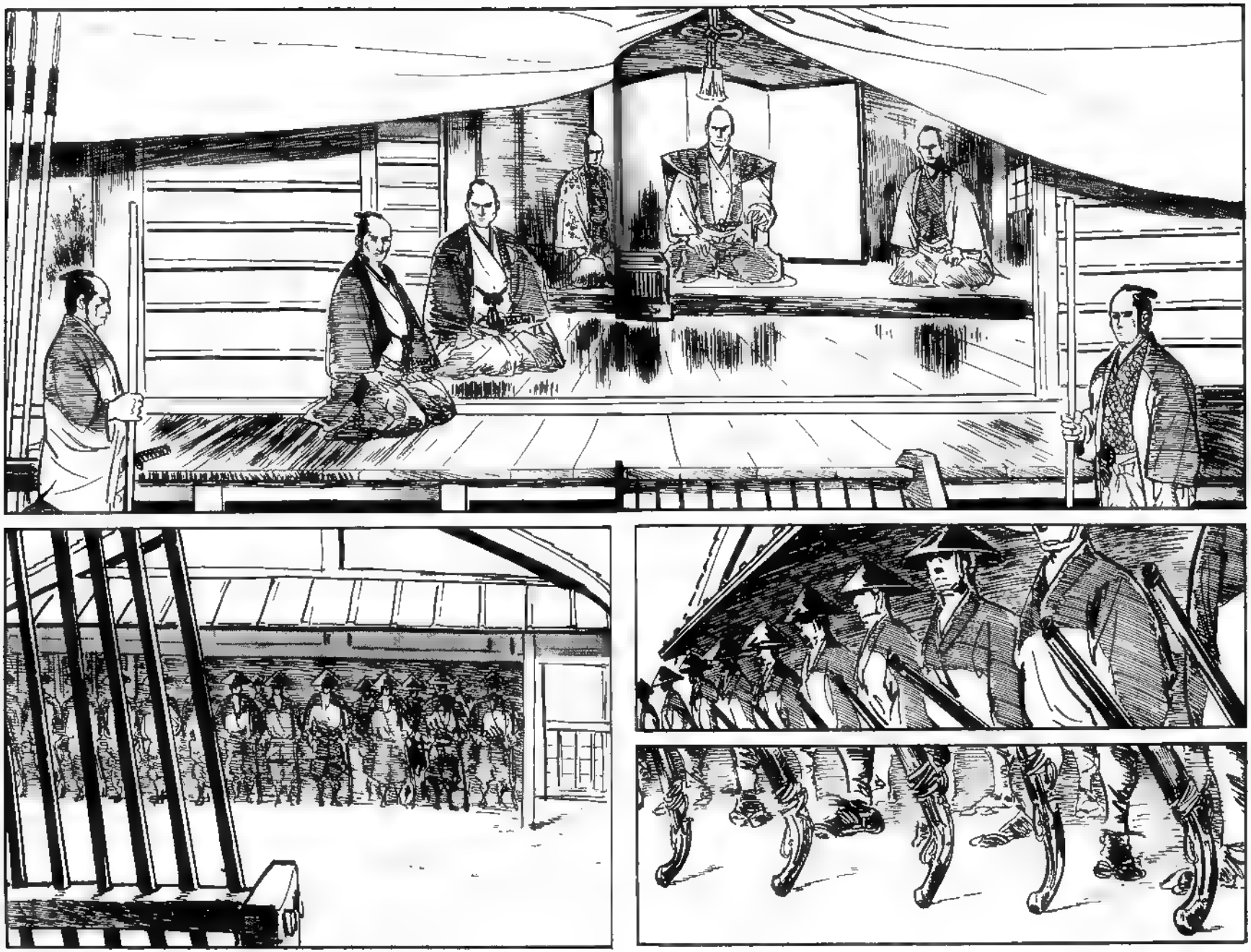

THE HAKONE SEKISHO WAS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE LORD OF ODAWARA CASTLE, OKUBO KAGA-NO-KAMI. ODAWARA HANSHI WORKED THE CHECKPOINT ON ONE-MONTH ROTATIONS.
SKREEE



Regulations

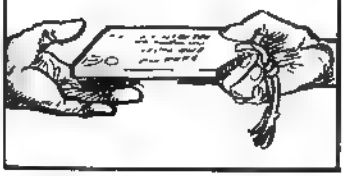
1. All travelers must remove hats and scarves before entering
2. Passengers must open palanquin doors for inspection.
   Female passengers must also be visible for inspection
3. To prevent delays, **kuge** attendants and **daimyō** retainers
   will not be inspected
   However, in suspicious or special circumstances, the
   aforelisted regulations will be strictly enforced on all.

Sekisho /Magistrate, Odawara **han**

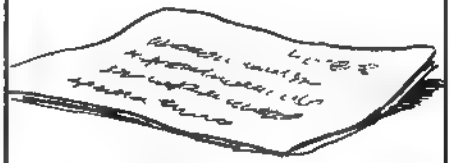


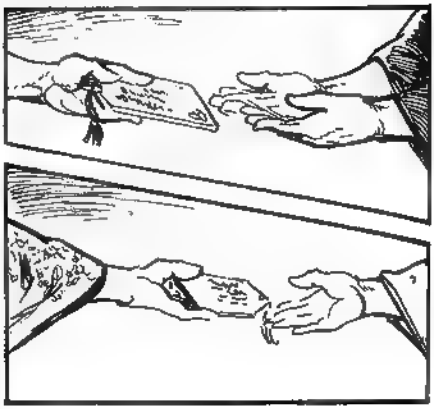
VERY WELL. YOU MAY PASS.

BUSHI AND COMMONERS ALIKE NEEDED A *TEGATA* TO PASS THROUGH THE *SEKISHO*. THE *TEGATA* FOR SAMURAI WAS A WOODEN TABLET IN THE SHAPE OF A JAPANESE *SHŌGI* CHESS PIECE, MEASURING FIVE *SUN* BY FOUR *SUN*.



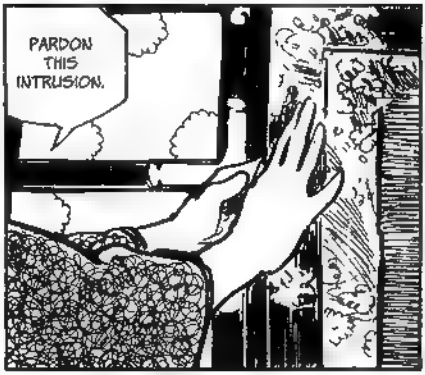
THE *TEGATA* FOR COMMONERS WAS WRITTEN ON SPECIAL *HODOMURA* PAPER FROM HODO VILLAGE IN JŌSHŪ. IT WAS ISSUED BY THE *MEISHU* OF THE COMMUNITY WHERE THE TRAVELER LIVED, AND COUNTER-SIGNED BY THE LORD OF THE *HAN* OR THE MAGISTRATE OF TRAVEL.





IN ACCORDANCE WITH REGULATIONS, WE MUST INSPECT THE PALANQUIN.

I AM THE FEMALE EXAMINER OF THIS SEKISHO.

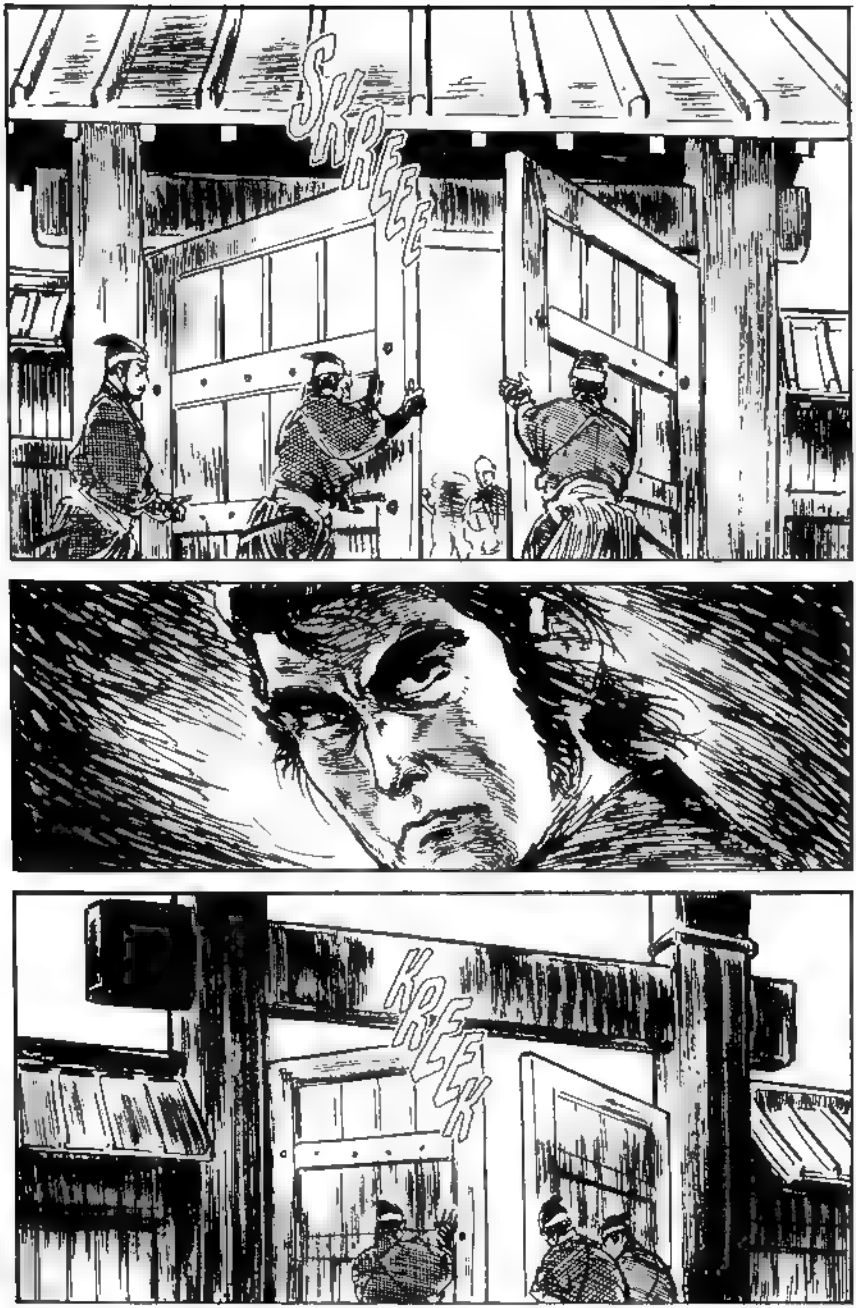

PARDON THIS INTRUSION.

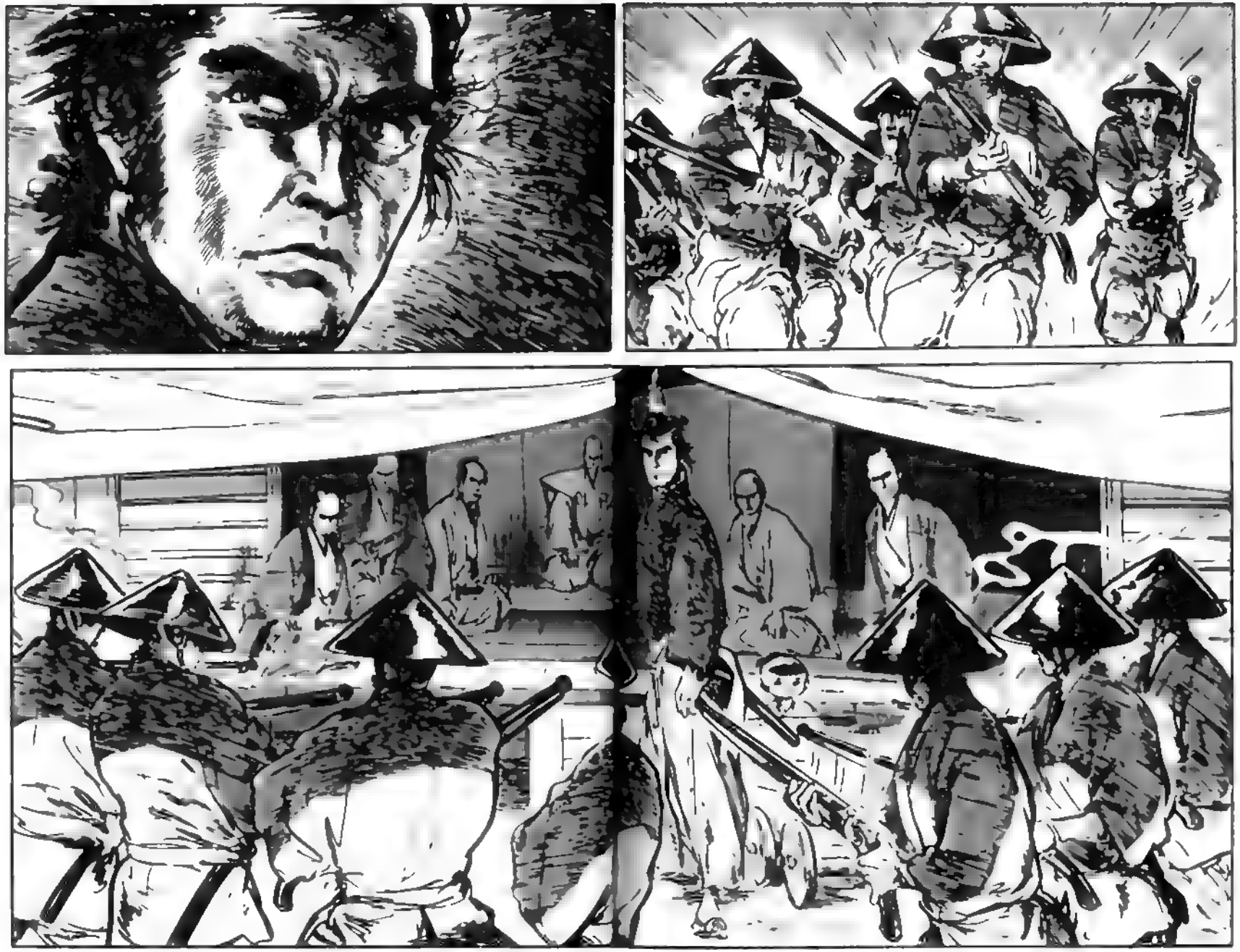
EVERY SEKISHO HAD A FEMALE EXAMINER TO INSPECT PALANQUINS WITH WOMAN PASSENGERS. TRADITIONALLY, THE WIFE OF A HANSHI PERFORMED THIS DUTY. IT WOULD HAVE BEEN A BREACH OF BOTH ETIQUETTE AND MORALS FOR A MALE HANSHI TO EXAMINE A WOMAN'S PALANQUIN.

O-KANINAGA
IN AGE, ABOVE
THIRTY
WITHOUT
QUESTION.
PASS

GARA
GARA

HMM. KAMIYA DENBEI OF MAISAKA, AND SON, KOTARŌ BOUND FOR BUSU SHINAGAWA
SNKK


SKREEE
KREEK



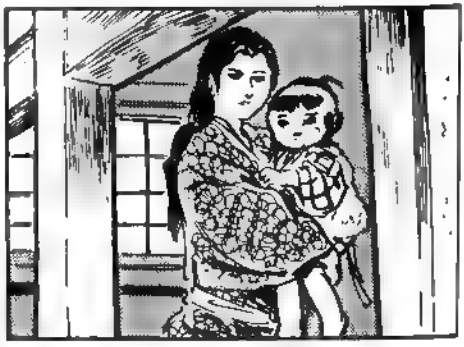
WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS?
"KAMIYA DENBEI OF MAISAKA" ? A BRAZEN LIE! YOU ARE ŌNISHI TAHEI, RŌNIN FROM BIZEN!
THE MURDERER OF THIS TEGATA'S RIGHTFUL OWNER, KAMIYA DENBE AND HIS CHILD! ON THE RUN FOR ROBBERIES AND MURDERS IN YOSHIDA CITY IN MATSUDAIRA HAN! A RIDER FROM MATSUDAIRA HAN TOLD US ABOUT YOU!
I SUPPOSE YOU KIDNAPPED THE BOY TO MATCH THE TEGATA!

DROP YOUR SWORD!
RESIST, AND THEY SHOOT!

DON'T BE A FOOL!
.....
.....

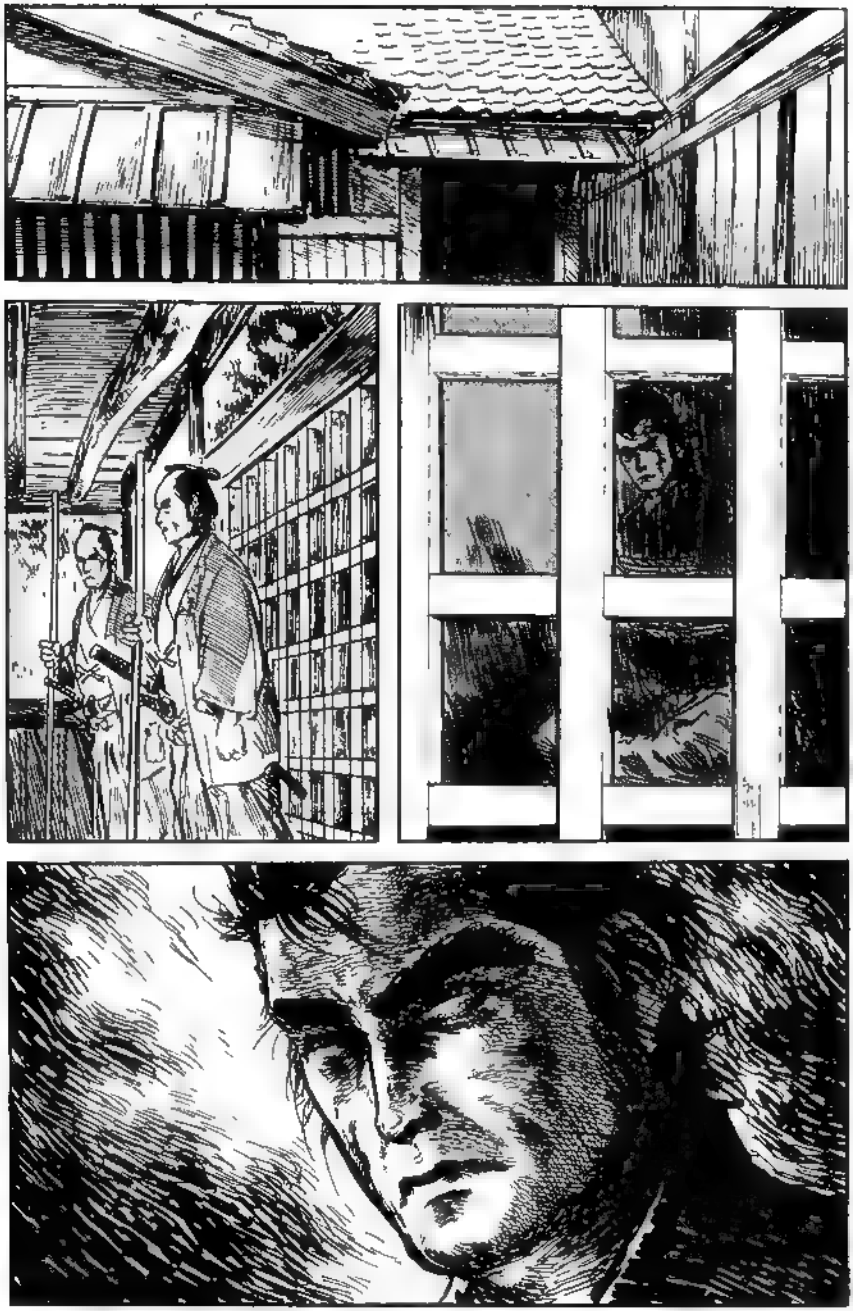
A HANSHI FROM MATSUDAIRA WILL ARRIVE TOMORROW TO TAKE YOU BACK. YOU'RE FINISHED

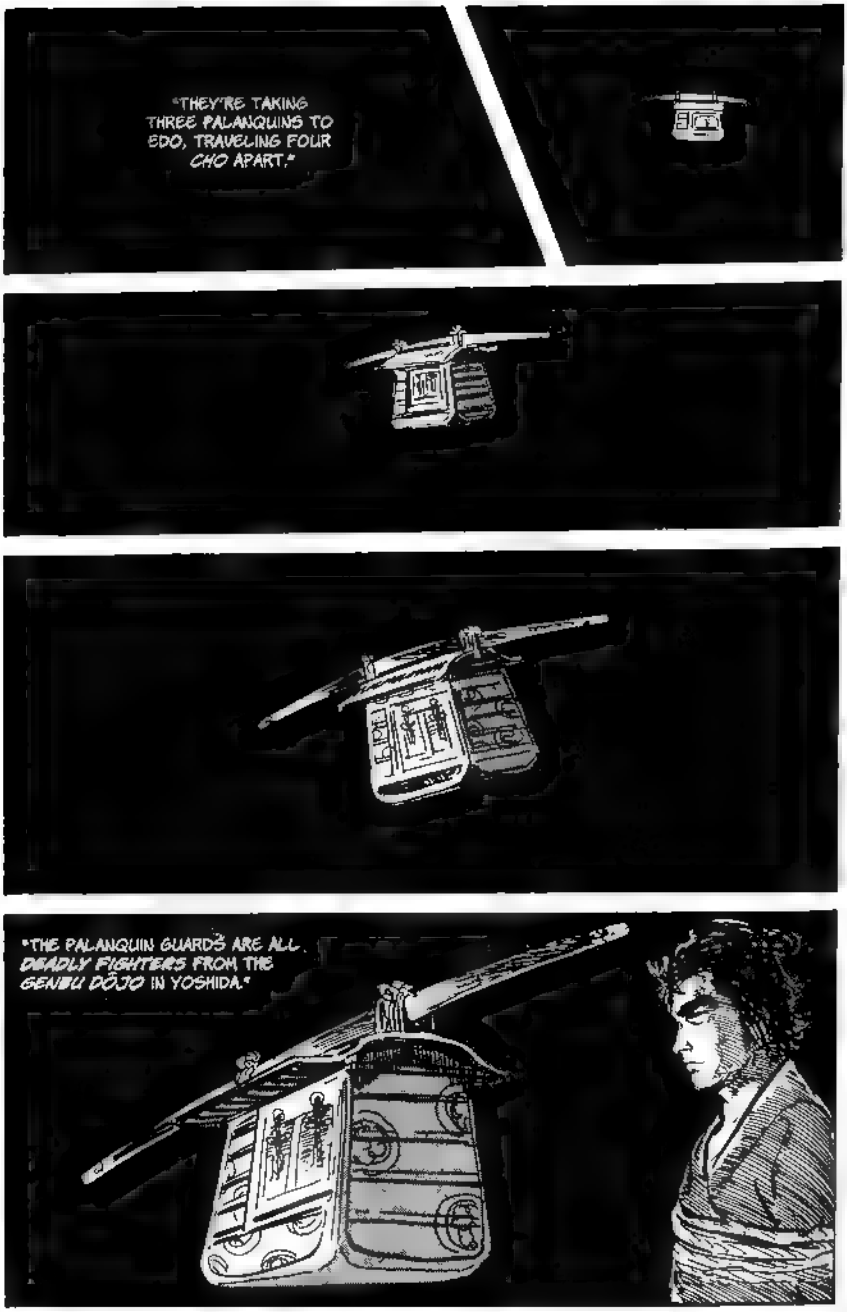
STAND!



POOR DEAR! WAS IT SCARY? BUT YOU'RE ALL SAFE NOW, HONEY
MAMA AND PAPA'LL COME RUNNING TO GET YOU, I'M SURE.
OH, YOU'RE SO CUTE! HOW COULD ANYONE PUT YOU IN SUCH DANGER .?

WILL YOU LOOK AFTER THE BOY, OMOYO-DONO?
GLADLY, SIR. I WAS SO *RELIEVED* THAT *RŌNIN* DIDN'T TAKE HIM HOSTAGE. YOU HANDLED IT *MAGNIFI-CENTLY*, SIR.
HE HAD ME WORRIED FOR A MINUTE THERE, BUT




"THEY'RE TAKING THREE PALANQUINS TO EDO, TRAVELING FOUR CHO APART."
"THE PALANQUIN GUARDS ARE ALL DEADLY FIGHTERS FROM THE GENBU DŌJO IN YOSHIDA."

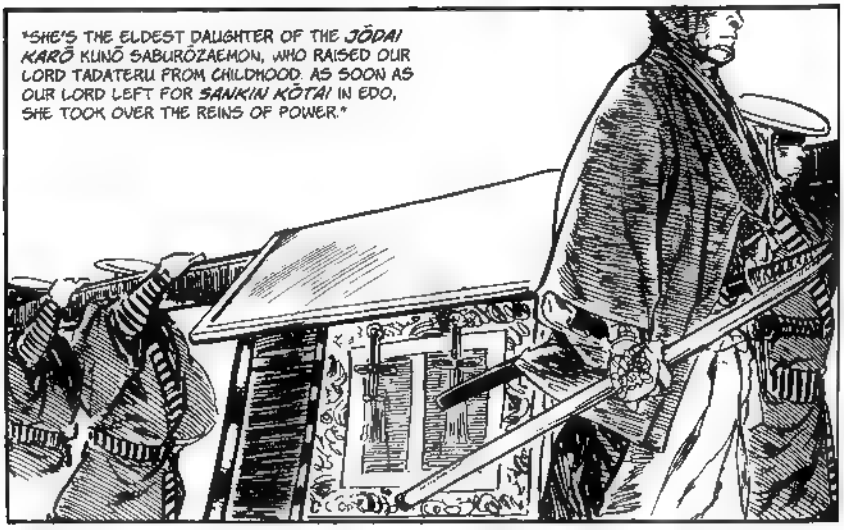
"THE FIRST PALANQUIN IS ESCORTED BY SAKAMOGI ARATA.
"ARATA'S A MASTER OF THE FUKUMI-YARI SPEAR, ABLE TO ADJUST ITS LENGTH AT WILL.
"HE'S TOO STRONG FOR ANY OF US TO FACE ON OUR OWN."

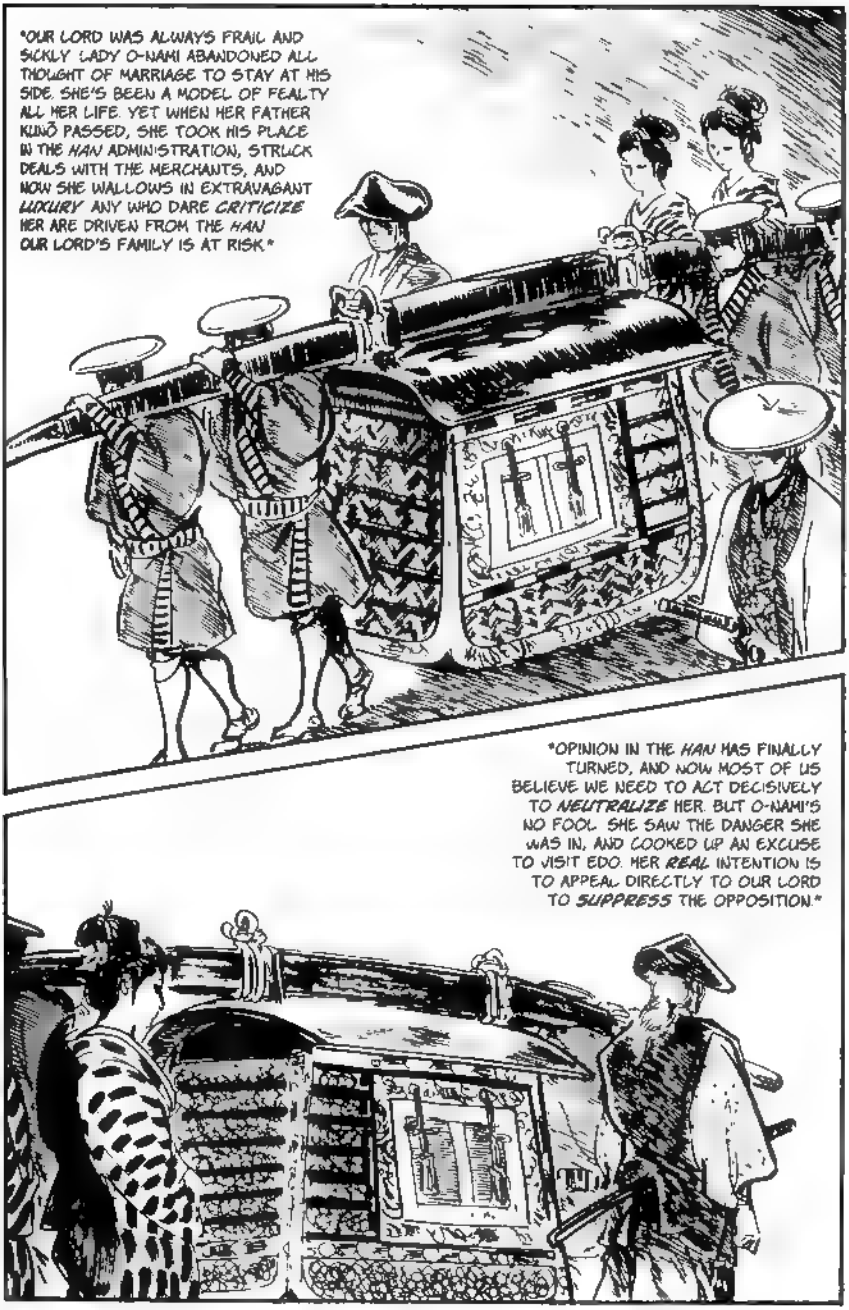
"THE SECOND PALANQUIN IS ESCORTED BY THE DŌJŌ'S ASSISTANT INSTRUCTOR, FUSEYA BUKICHI.
"HE'S BEEN CALLED 'IRON-GAUNTLET FUSEYA' FOR HIS SKILL WITH THE KUROKOTE HE WEARS ON BOTH ARMS.
"HE'S ABLE TO BLOCK AN OPPONENT'S BLADE WITH HIS FOREARMS, SNAP IT IN TWO, AND THEN FINISH HIM OFF WITH EASE."

"BUT THE THIRD PALANQUIN...
"...THE THIRD IS PROTECTED BY THE HEAD OF THE DŌJO HIMSELF, MINOWA KURANDO!
"KURANDO IS THE DŌJO'S GRAND MASTER—HIS RYŌSŪI-RYU FAST DRAW IS ALMOST GODLIKE. HE CAN CUT DOWN FOUR MEN IN THE SPACE OF A SINGLE BREATH."

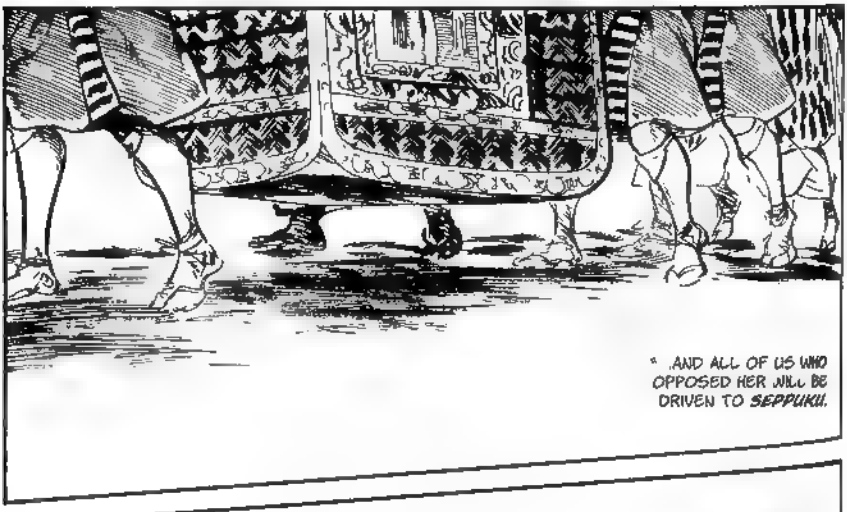
"LADY O-NAMI SHOULD BE IN ONE OF THE PALANQUINS. BUT WE DON'T KNOW WHICH.
"FOR ALL WE KNOW, SHE MANY NOT BE IN ANY OF THEM AND THE WHOLE DEPLOYMENT IS A SETUP TO DRAW AN ATTACK.
"THEY WANT TO DRAW OUT THE HAN DISSIDENTS, AND CRUSH US IN ONE STROKE.
"AND YET WE CAN'T STAND BY WHILE O-NAMI ENTERS EDO."
"WE MUST ATTACK NOW...OR WAVE."
"YET IF WE DO ATTACK, WE WON'T STAND A CHANCE AGAINST THE CREAM OF THE GENBU DOJO.
"THEY'VE THOUGHT OF EVERYTHING!"
"AS THINGS STAND NOW, MATSUDAIRA YOSHIDA HAN IS THE PLAYTHING OF A SINGLE WOMAN—O-NAMI!"

"SHE WIELDS ABSOLUTE POWER AT *WILL!*"

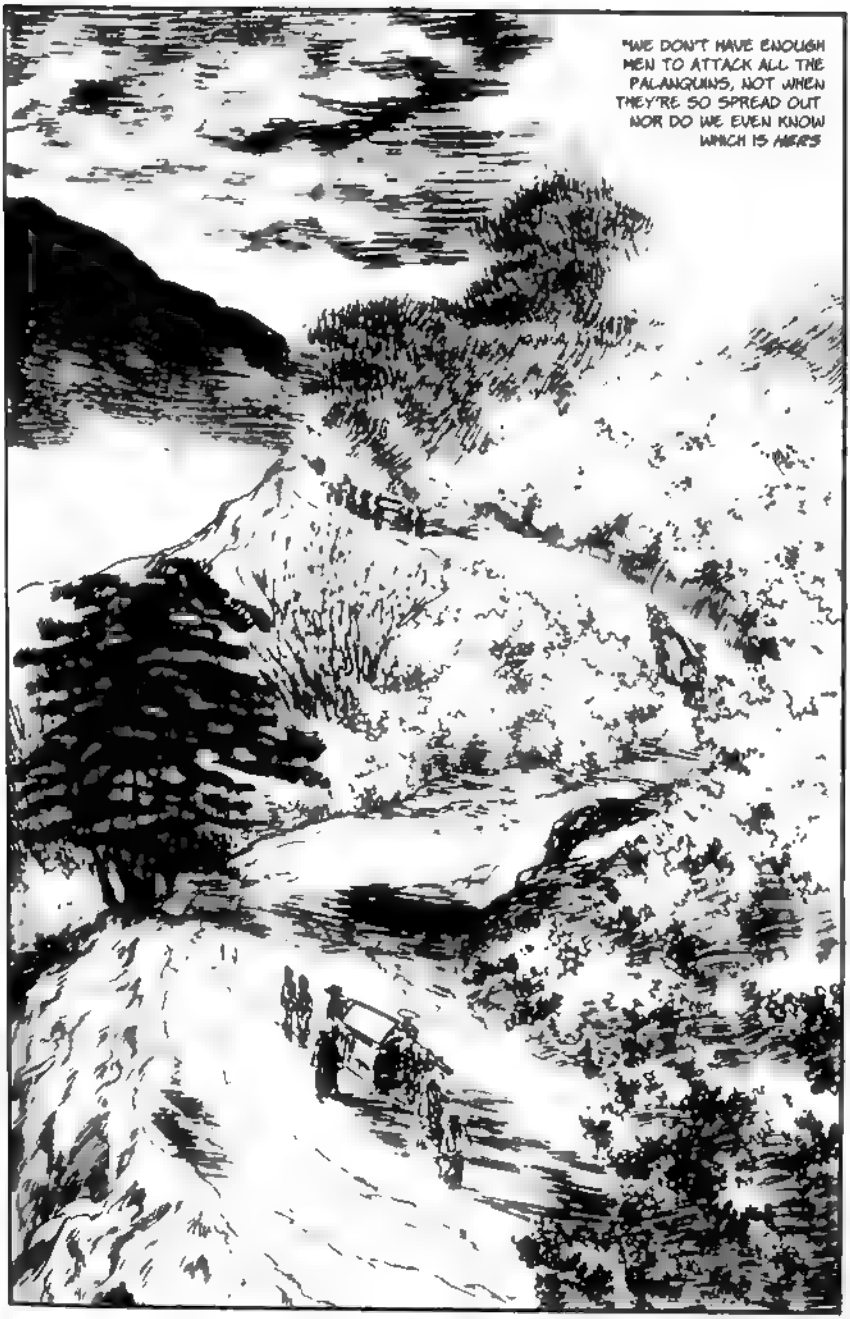

"SHE'S THE ELDEST DAUGHTER OF THE *JŌDAI KARŌ* KUNŌ SABURŌZAEMON, WHO RAISED OUR LORD TADATERU FROM CHILDHOOD. AS SOON AS OUR LORD LEFT FOR *SANKIN KŌTAI* IN EDO, SHE TOOK OVER THE REINS OF POWER."


*OUR LORD WAS ALWAYS FRAIL AND SICKLY. LADY O-NAMI ABANDONED ALL THOUGHT OF MARRIAGE TO STAY AT HIS SIDE. SHE'S BEEN A MODEL OF FEALTY ALL HER LIFE. YET WHEN HER FATHER KUNŌ PASSED, SHE TOOK HIS PLACE IN THE *HAN* ADMINISTRATION, STRUCK DEALS WITH THE MERCHANTS, AND NOW SHE WALLOWS IN EXTRAVAGANT *LUXURY*. ANY WHO DARE *CRITICIZE* HER ARE DRIVEN FROM THE *HAN*. OUR LORD'S FAMILY IS AT RISK.*
*OPINION IN THE *HAN* HAS FINALLY TURNED, AND NOW MOST OF US BELIEVE WE NEED TO ACT DECISIVELY TO ***NEUTRALIZE*** HER. BUT O-NAMI'S NO FOOL. SHE SAW THE DANGER SHE WAS IN, AND COOKED UP AN EXCUSE TO VISIT EDO. HER ***REAL*** INTENTION IS TO APPEAL DIRECTLY TO OUR LORD TO ***SUPPRESS*** THE OPPOSITION.*

"OUR LORD STILL TRUSTS O-NAMI. IF WE LET HER REACH EDO, ALL HOPE OF REFORM WILL BE DASHED...


"...AND ALL OF US WHO OPPOSED HER WILL BE DRIVEN TO SEPPUKU.

"FOR THE GOOD OF THE HAN, FOR THE GOOD OF THE CLAN, O-NAMI MUST DIE"

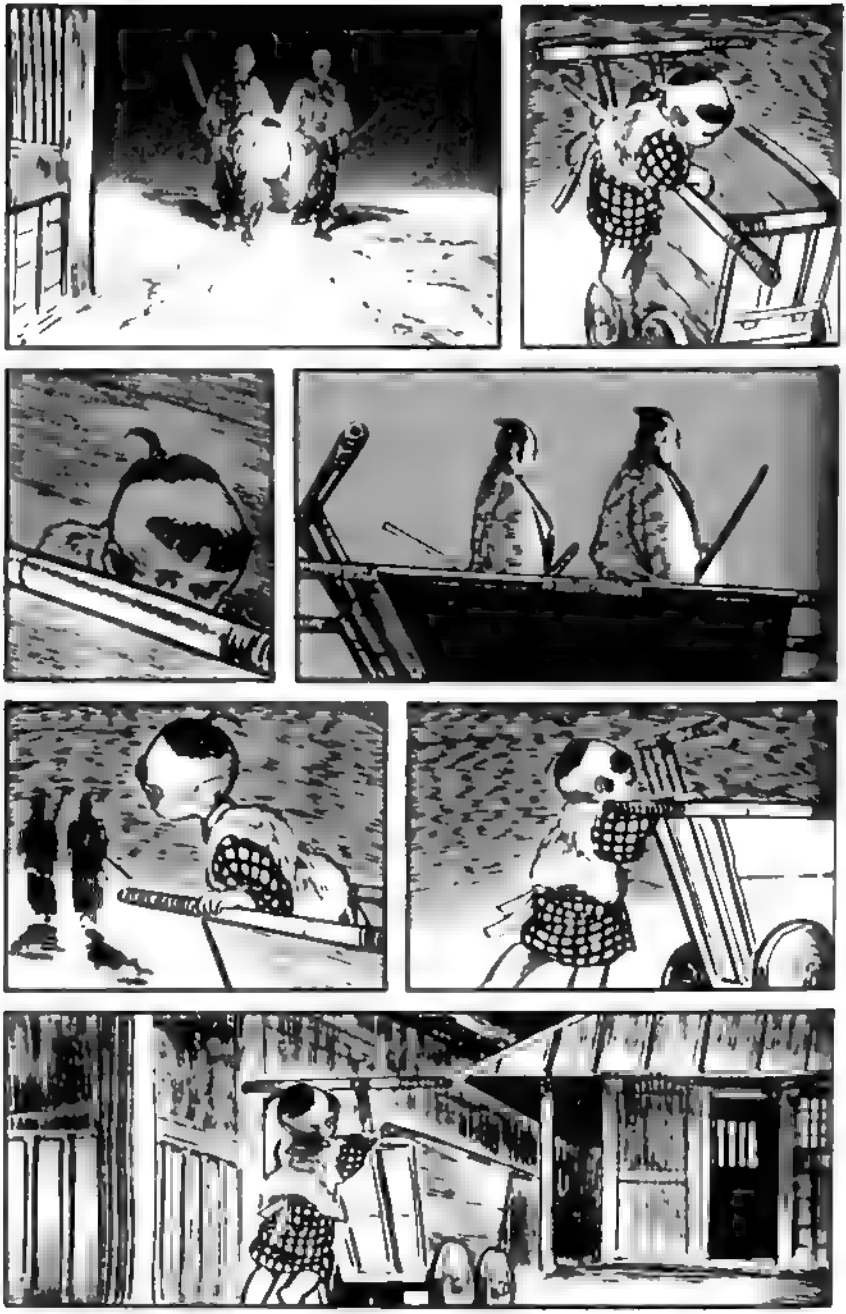

"WE DON'T HAVE ENOUGH MEN TO ATTACK ALL THE PALANQUINS, NOT WHEN THEY'RE SO SPREAD OUT NOR DO WE EVEN KNOW WHICH IS *HERS*

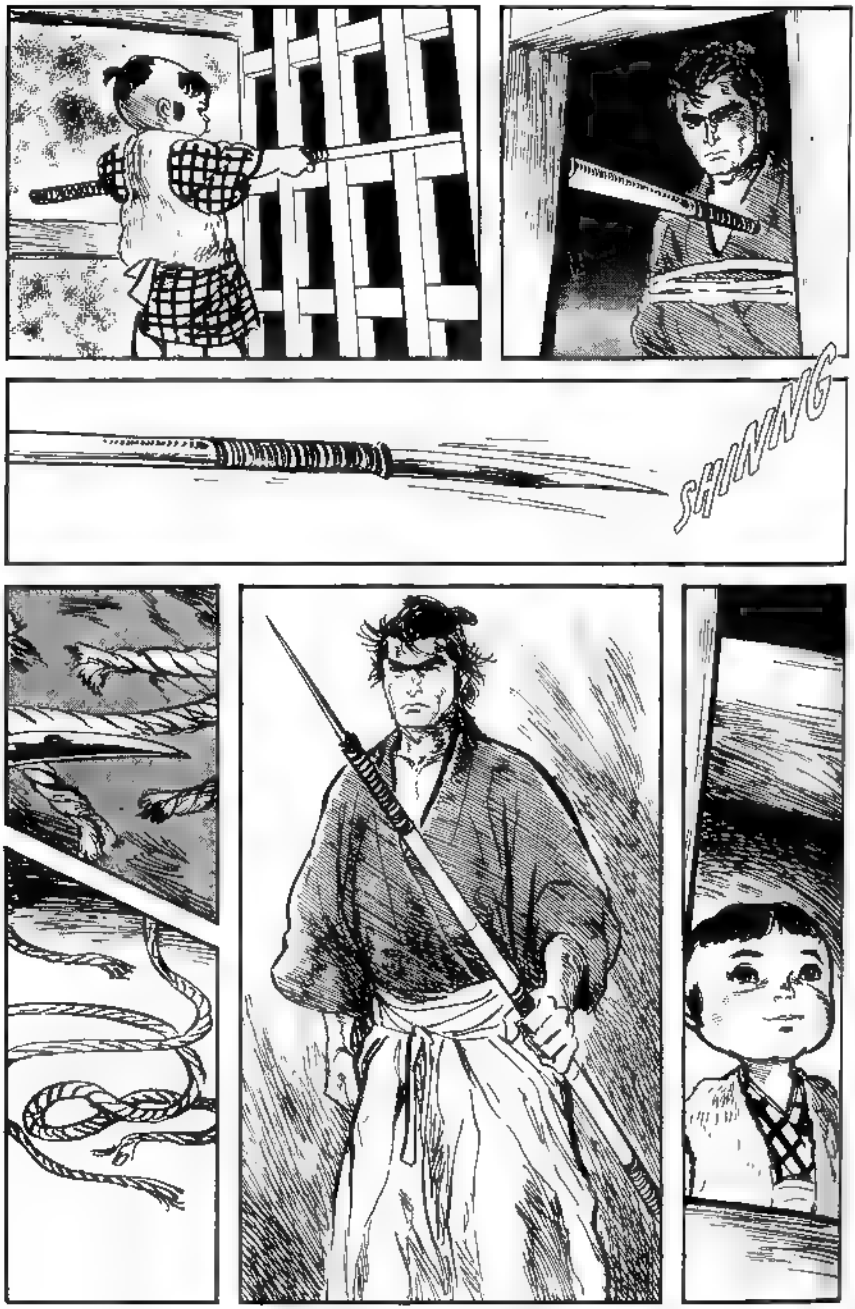
"YET ONCE THEY CLEAR THE HAKONE SEKISHO, THEY'LL BE REINFORCED BY A GUARD FROM EDO. IT'LL BE IMPOSSIBLE AFTER THAT. SO WE BEG YOU—KILL LADY O-NAMI ON THE ROAD TO HAKONE."

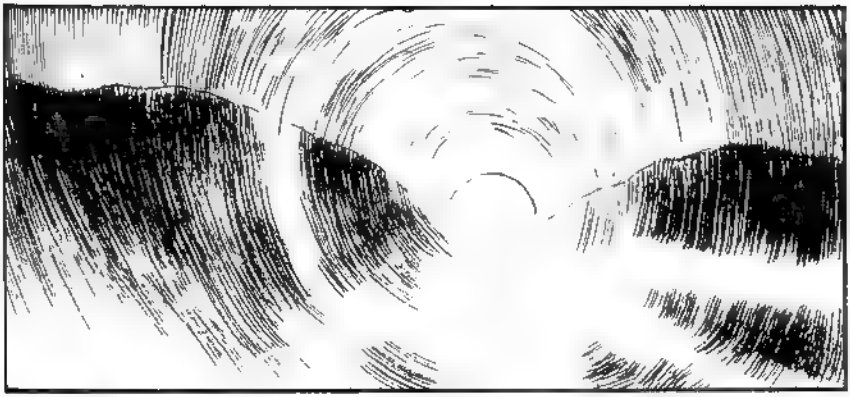
"WH-WHAT?! ARE YOU SERIOUS? INSIDE THE SEKISHO?!"

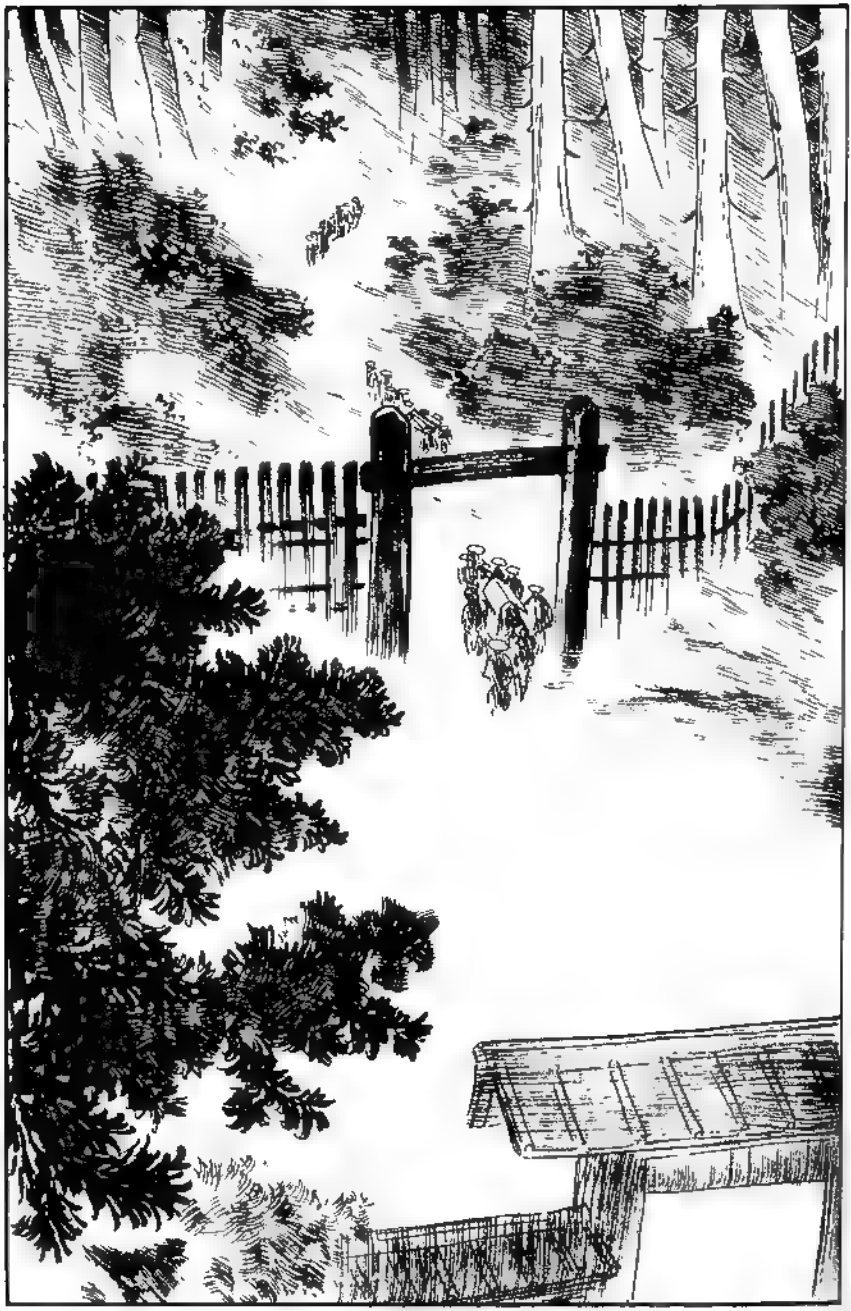
"AH... I SEE! THE PALANQUINS WILL BE TOGETHER, THE FEMALE EXAMINER WILL SEE WHO'S INSIDE...YES! YES, IT COULD WORK! AND YET...INSIDE THE SEKISHO ITSELF?!"

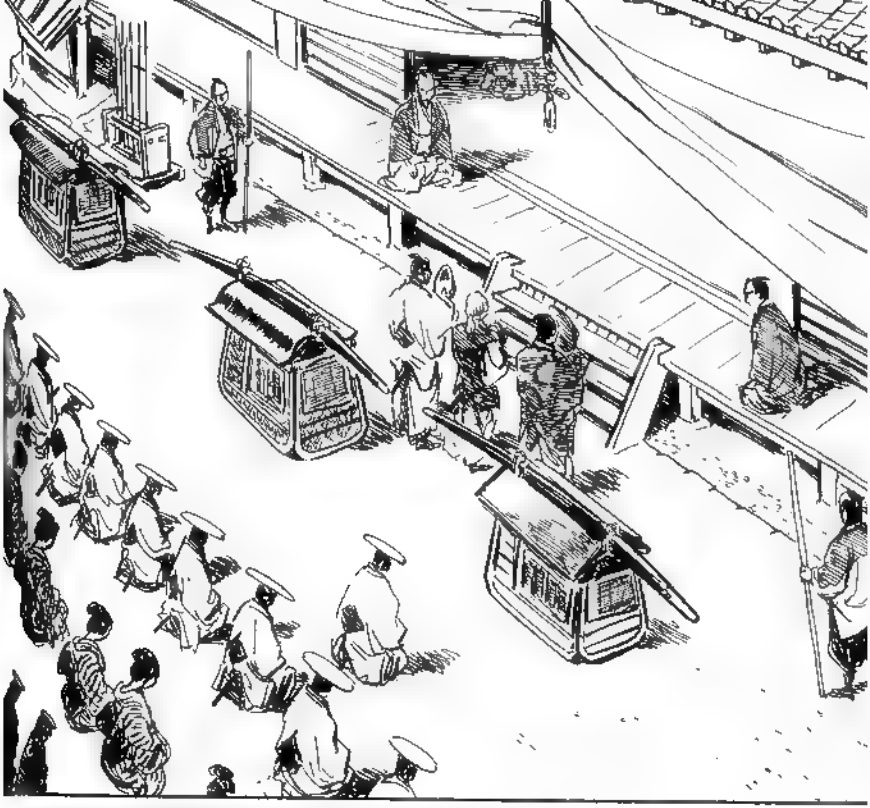
CARA
CARA

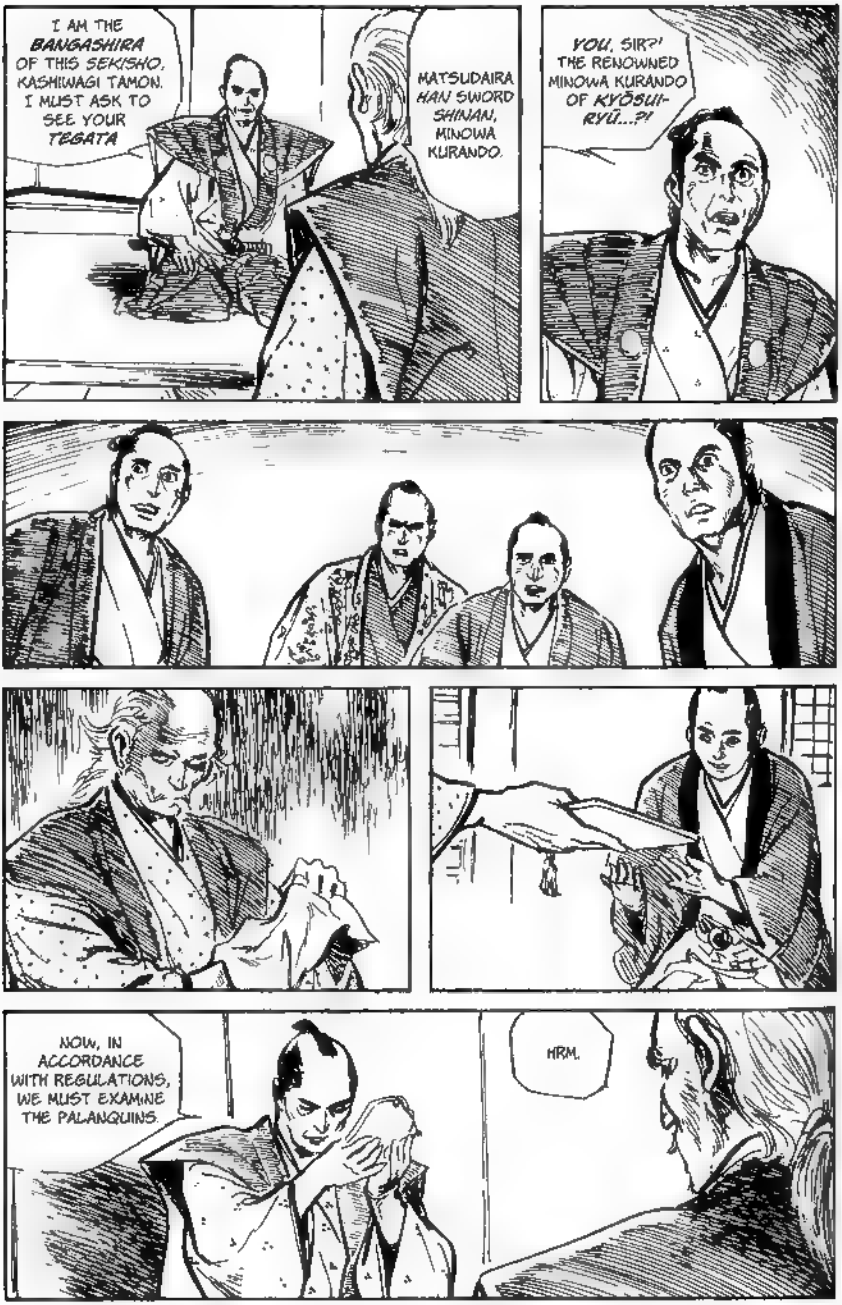



SHINING








I AM THE BANGASHIRA OF THIS SEKISHO, KASHIWAGI TAMON. I MUST ASK TO SEE YOUR TEGATA
MATSUDAIRA HAN SWORD SHINAN, MINOWA KURANDO.
YOU, SIR?! THE RENOWNED MINOWA KURANDO OF KYŌSUI-RYŪ...?!
NOW, IN ACCORDANCE WITH REGULATIONS, WE MUST EXAMINE THE PALANQUINS.
HRM.

BY THE WAY, MINOWA-SAMA
WE'RE HOLDING THE RŌNIN ŌNISHI TAHEI. THE ONE YOUR HAN WANTED CAPTURED FOR THOSE TERRIBLE CRIMES IN YOSHIDA.
WHO TOLD YOU THIS...?
IT CAME DIRECT FROM MATSUDAIRA'S METSUKE, DELIVERED BY HORSE MESSENGER.
THEN IT MUST BE SO. IN ANY CASE, MY MISSION IS TO ESCORT LADY O-NAMI. I HAVE LITTLE TO DO WITH THE METSUKE'S WORK.
WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR ALL YOU HAVE DONE.

GARA
GARA
WHA—?!
HEY!!
OH!
GARA
GARA

SOMEONE CATCH HIM!
STOP IT!
COME HERE!
WHOA ?!
COME BACK HERE!
AH!!
YOU LITTLE—!

QUICKLY!
CATCH HIM NOW!
I DON'T BELIEVE THIS! NEVER IN THE HISTORY OF THE SEKISHO...!
OOPH!
OUR JOURNEY IS URGENT MAY WE PROCEED?
OF COURSE! I-I'M TERRIBLY SORRY

HE WANTS YOU TO CHASE HIM! THAT'S WHAT CHILDREN DO!
ENOUGH!!
THE BOY WAS KIDNAPPED BY THAT RUFFIAN ŌNISHI WE'RE SIMPLY LOOKING AFTER HIM UNTIL HIS PARENTS CLAIM HIM. PLEASE FORGIVE THE DELAY
I AM THE FEMALE EXAMINER OF THIS SEKISHO
FORGIVE THIS INTRUSION.
O-KAMINAGA IN AGE BELOW TWENTY
WITHOUT QUESTION.

FORGIVE THIS INTRUSION.
O-KAMI-NAGA
IN AGE, ABOVE FORTY WI-

SHUK
AAUGHHK!

HRUUU
DAMN!
YOU BASTARD!

YOU'LL PAY!
KLANG
FWSSH
THWAP
SCHING
NNG!

KRSSH
AAUGGH!
AROX
DAMN YOU SCUM!

SHAKK
SHAKK
SST
RNG!
SKRRRRT
SKASSH

THKK
NGHKK!
SH-
SHOOT HIM
DOWN!
STAY!
WE MUST
FIND OUT WHO
HIRED HIM, OR
ALL IS LOST

WHO ARE YOU?
KSHK
SHIHŌ-RYŪ.
ŌGAMI ITTŌ.
!

SHIKK
THAT COMMOTION WITH THE BOY DISTRACTED ME FROM FEELING YOUR PRESENCE ON THE ROOF- MINOWA KURANDO'S MISTAKE OF A LIFETIME!
I WALKED RIGHT INTO YOUR TRAP!
....
....
IF YOU STOOP TO SUCH KNAVERY, THEN I, TOO, NEED NO REGRET
AT CUTTING DOWN AN UNARMED MAN!
PREPARE!

SNIK

SWISH
SSSH
THE INNER SECRETS OF Y-YAGYŪ SHIRAHA-DORI

BUT BUT YOU'RE SHIŌ-RYŪ!
TO DEFEAT THE ENEMY, BE THE ENEMY!
ENEMY ?
THE YAGYŪ ?!
WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?!
SHOOT HIM, YOU FOOLS !!
BKOOM
BKOOM
BKOOM

SHNNG
KRANG
KTANG
KANNG
AAH!?!
UHH..?
BEFORE YOU RELOAD, YOU'LL BE CROSSING THE RIVER SANZU!!
AHH!
UH, UHH.

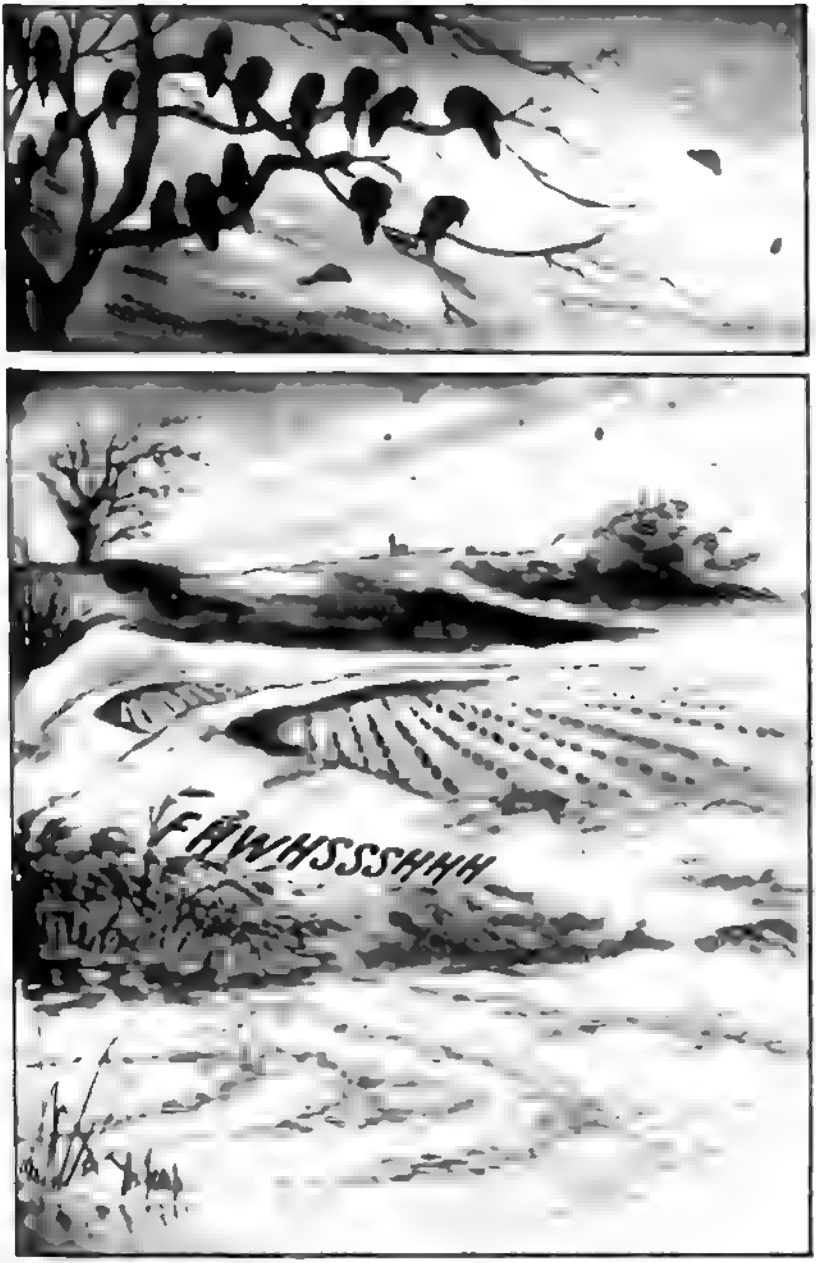
UUHH.
GULP!
PUT YOUR SWORDS IN HERE.
B-BUT
. . . .
. . . .
GARA
GARA
KTAK
KANG
I MUST ASK YOU ALL TO REMOVE YOUR SWORDS.
AH.
. . . .
. . .

GRRR...!!
OH!
LITTLE BOY!
PLEASE RELEASE THE CHILD
N-NEVER!
TAKE HIM HOSTAGE AGAIN? AFTER ALL YOU'VE DONE!
ARE. ARE YOU EVEN HUMAN?!

NO!! I'M RETURNING HIM TO HIS PARENTS! KILL ME IF YOU MUST! YOU WON'T HAVE HIM!
PAPA!
FATHER AND . SON?!
THEY .. THEY CAN'T BE...

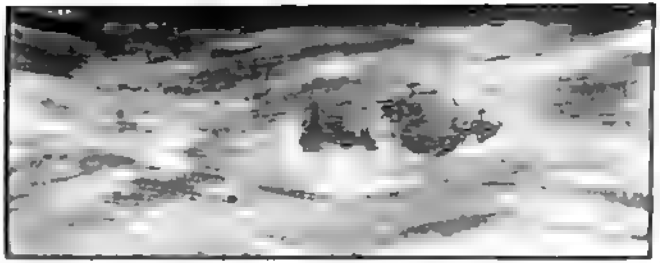
the sixty-first

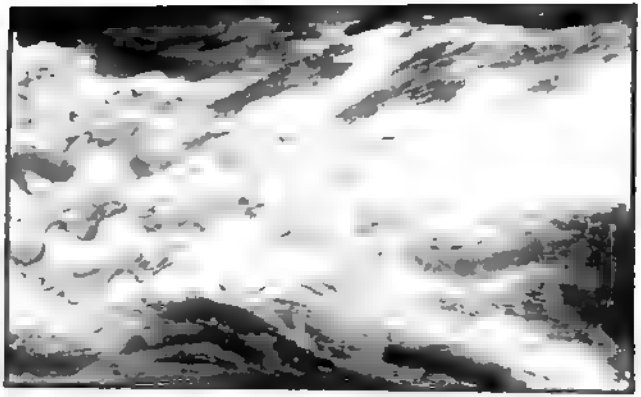
Shattered Stones

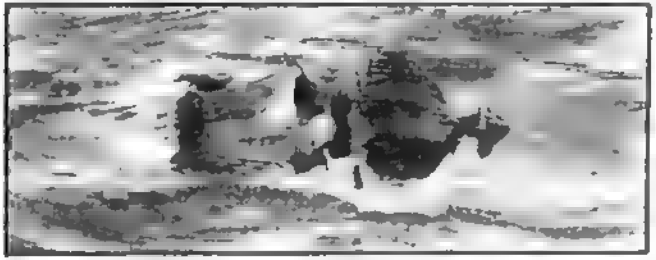

FWHSSSHHH

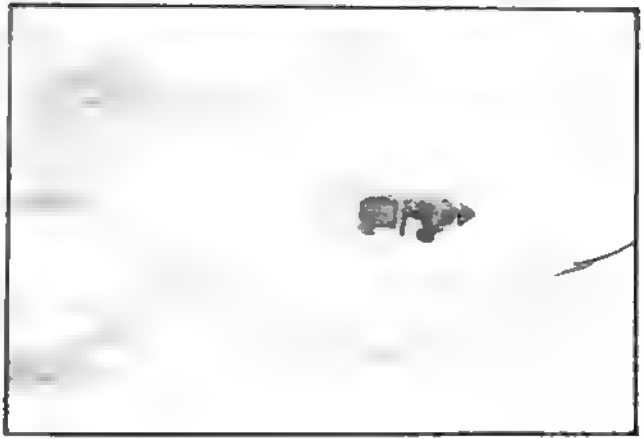
KCHOO!
KHH-
CHOO!
SNRF

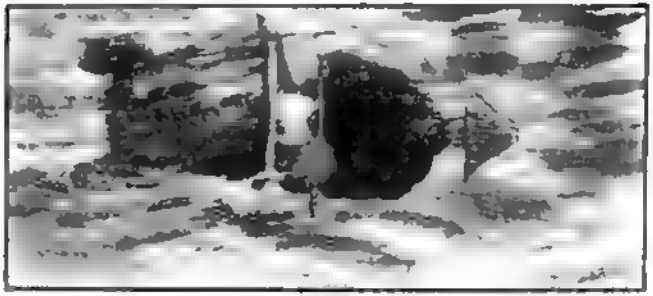
HHH
HHCHKK!
SNRK



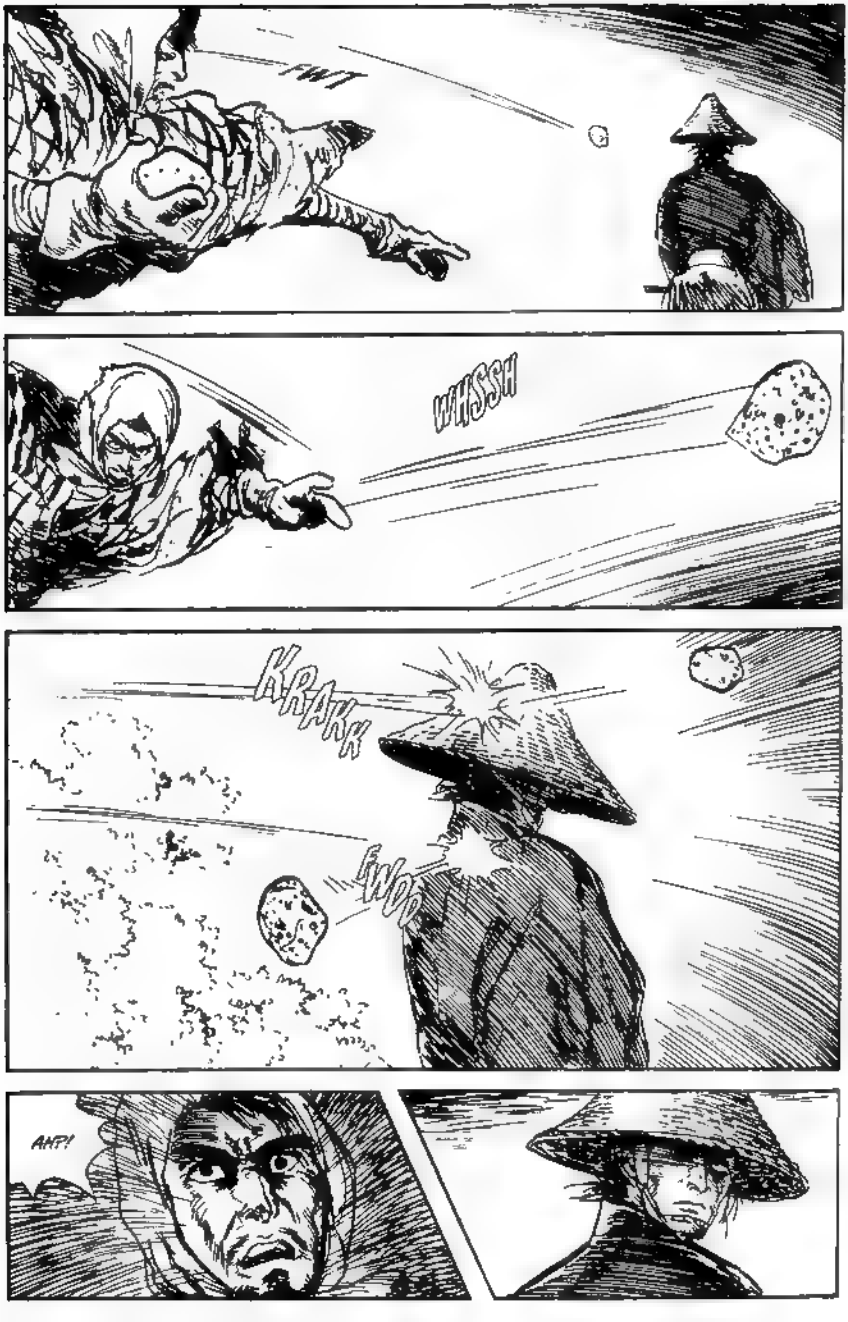


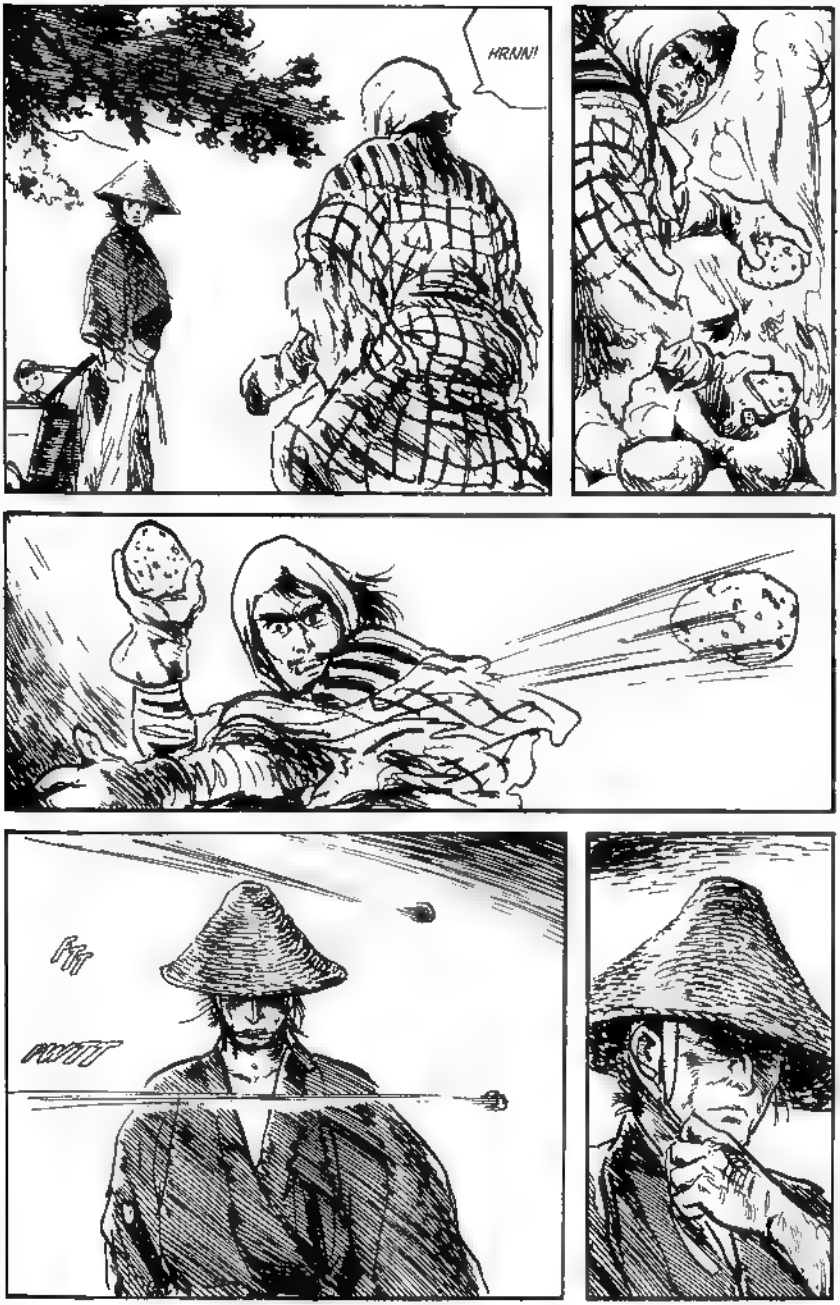


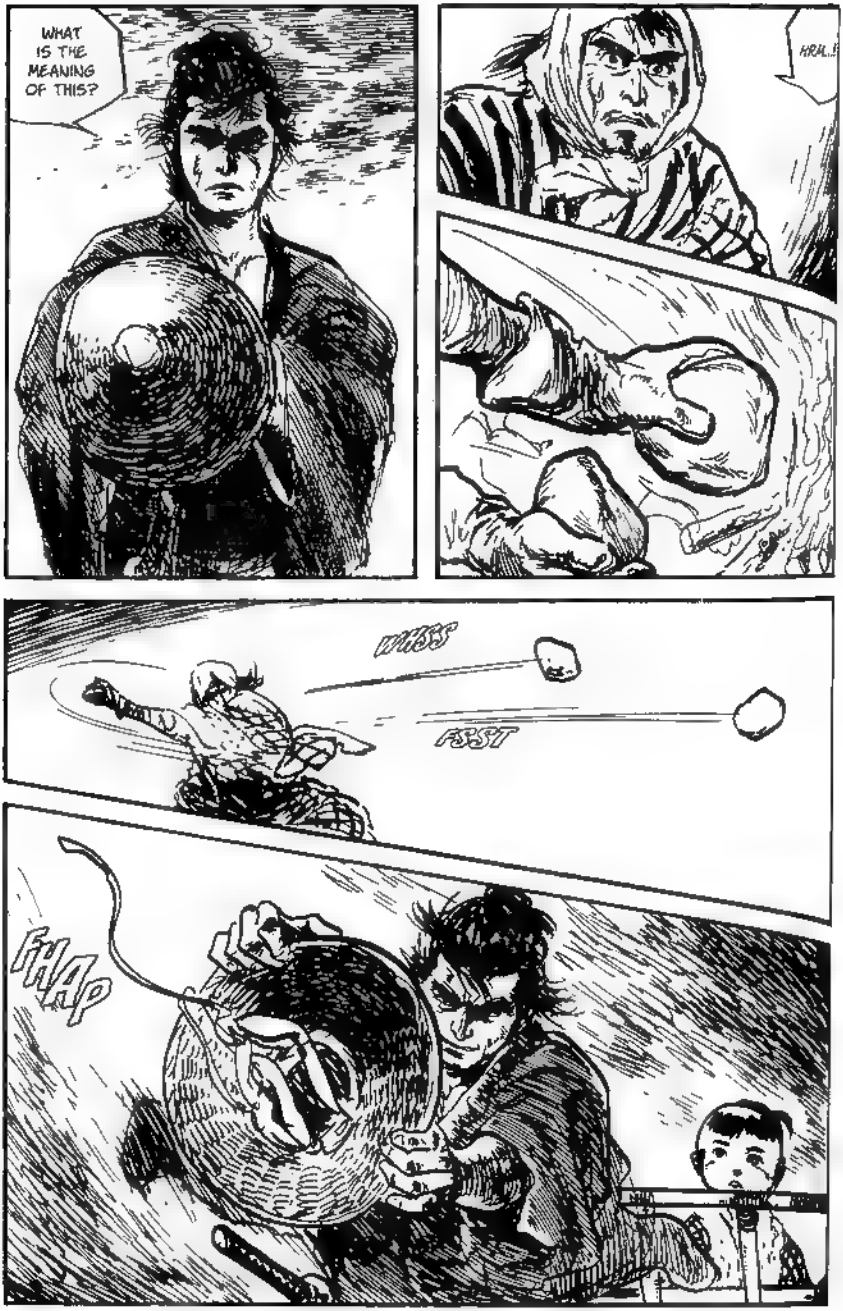




I NEED A STONE LARGE ENOUGH TO KEEP THE BOY WARM IN HIS CART
COMING RIGHT UP, SIR. .

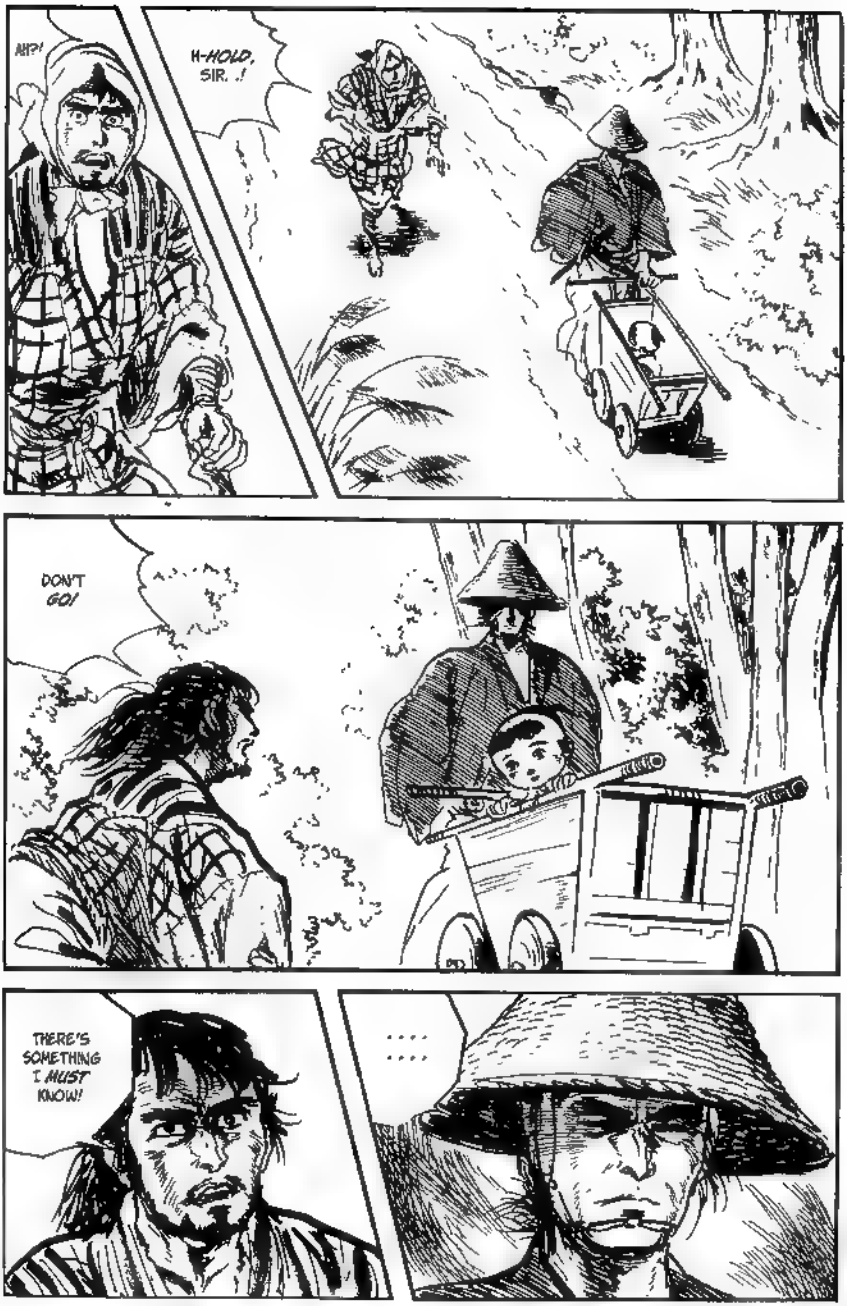

WHSSH
KRAKK
AHP!


HRUN!


WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS?
HRAL!
WHSS
FSST
FHAP

SHWAP
FHDD

....
....!
PLEASE FORGIVE THIS INSULT!
IF I HAVE ANGERED YOU, PUNISH ME AS YOU WILL.


AH?!
H-HOLD, SIR..!
DON'T GO!
THERE'S SOMETHING I MUST KNOW!
....
....

WHY WOULD A SWORDSMAN AS VIGILANT AS YOURSELF NOT DEFLECT MY WANTON STONING?
A SMALL STONE CAN DO ME NO HARM.
YET IF I KNOCK IT ASIDE, IT MIGHT STRIKE THE BOY
THEN. .THEN YOU COULD *SENSE* THE WEIGHT OF THE STONES IN *FLIGHT*.
AND. . YOUR *HAT*?
THOSE STONES WERE *NOT* LIGHT
IF I BLOCKED THEM WITH MY SWORD, THEY COULD SCATTER HOT SHARDS.
NOR WOULD I WISH TO NOTCH MY SWORD POINTLESSLY
SIR! *YOU* ARE THE MAN.

A MAN SUCH AS YOU. YOU'RE THE TRUE SAMURAI I SEEK!
I HAVE A REQUEST! I AM MASTERLESS NOW, AS YOU CAN SEE. YET I WAS ONCE A CAVALRY OFFICER OF TOBA HAN. .
ENOUGH.
WHEN I BOUGHT THE STONE, I REALIZED YOU WERE A SAMURAI IN DISGUISE.
I KNEW THERE MUST BE A REASON FOR YOUR ACTIONS.
WHEN YOU THREW THE ROCKS TO TEST MY SKILL, I ASSUMED IT WAS CONNECTED.
THUS I DID NOT TAKE YOU TO TASK, AND TRIED TO LEAVE.
IF..IF YOU SAW THAT MUCH, THEN—

FOR REASONS OF OUR OWN, WE HAVE ABANDONED THE WAYS OF MAN! FATHER AND SON, WE LIVE IN MEIFUMADŌ, ON THE BORDER OF THE SIX PATHS AND THE FOUR LIVES.
LOVE, AFFECTION, OBLIGATION, REVENGE! JOY, ANGER, SORROW PLEASURE! OF THE HUMAN EMOTIONS WE CHOOSE REVENGE! WE HAVE CUT ALL TIES WITH LIFE TO ACHIEVE OUR QUEST!
NOW, FORGIVE US
HMM.

LIVING IN MEIFUMADŌ ON THE BORDER OF THE SIX PATHS AND THE FOUR LIVES
SIR!! I- I NEED AN ASSASSIN!
SKRRR
THE OX-HEADED, HORSE-HEADED DEMONS OF MEIFUMADŌ CUT SHORT THE LIVES OF MEN AND DRAG THEM DOWN TO HELL! THEY SAY THEIR WAGES ARE LIVING BLOOD!
YOU SAY YOU LIVE IN MEIFUMADŌ? THEN YOU LIVE BY ASSASSINATION

INDEED!
ASSASSIN, LONE WOLF AND CUB! THE WAGES OF MEIFUMADŌ, FIVE HUNDRED RYŌ!

WAKIDA KAGEYU, FORMER CAVALRY OFFICER OF SHISHŪ TOBA HAN. I LEFT MY LORD'S SERVICE THESE THREE YEARS PAST
THIS IS OUR FAMILY TREASURE PASSED DOWN FOR GENERATIONS IN NAME AWATA-GUCHI KUNIMITSU! IN VALUE, ONE THOUSAND IN GOLD
I SAID FIVE HUNDRED RYŌ.

I AM MASTERLESS NOW I HAVE NO MONEY
IS THIS NOT ENOUGH .?
THIS SWORD IS YOUR LIFE.
I CANNOT TAKE LIFE IN PAYMENT
AND YET
CLICK
THEN.
EXPLAIN.

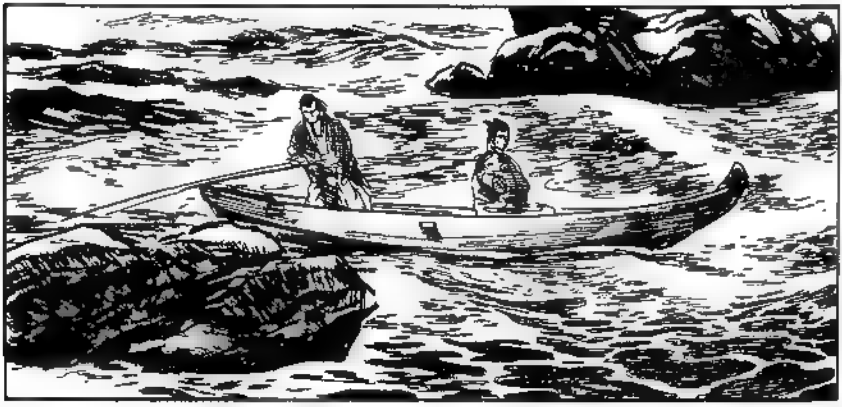
CAN YOU KILL A PERSON WITHOUT THE KILLING?
CAN YOU STEAL A PERSON'S POWER WITHOUT STEALING THEIR LIFE...?
. . . .
. . . .
TO THIS PERSON, LOSS OF POWER IS WORSE THAN DEATH!
ONCE SHE WAS MY WIFE.
TODAY, HOWEVER, SHE IS THE CONCUBINE MAKOTO SERVING INAGAKI SEIZAN, THE SEQUESTERED FORMER LORD OF TOBA HAN
A LASCIVIOUS WOMAN, ENAMORED OF LUXURY SHE STAGED A LITTLE PERFORMANCE, FLINGING HERSELF IN FRONT OF OUR FORMER LORD AS HE JOURNEYED THROUGH THE HAN ON HORSEBACK.

SHE SEDUCED HER WAY INTO HIS HEART, AND HAD ME BANISHED
AND NOW SHE RUNS THE HAN FROM THE SHADOWS, THE SHALLOW CREATURE.
I COULD KILL HER EASILY ENOUGH. YET THAT WAY SHE WOULD DIE WITHOUT ONCE SEEING THE ERROR OF HER WAYS.
GRCCH
IF POSSIBLE, I WANT HER TO BE FORCED TO CONFRONT HER SINS, TO SEE AT LAST THE WAY OF RIGHT LIVING FOR A HUMAN BEING, THE TRUE PATH IN LIFE FOR A WOMAN. AND TAKE HER OWN LIFE, BY HER OWN HAND
SUCH IS THE DEEPEST DESIRE OF THIS PATHETIC CUCKOLD LAUGH AT ME IF YOU WILL.
AND THIS WOMAN. YOU STILL...?
IT SHAMES ME TO ADMIT IT, BUT I ONLY LINGER IN THIS WORLD BECAUSE I LOVE HER STILL.
GRKK

MAKOTO HAS A CHILD BARELY A YEAR IN AGE. OUR FORMER LORD DOTES UPON HIM, BUT BEYOND A DOUBT THE BOY IS MINE.
AND NOW HE IS AT THE CENTER OF A SUCCESSION STRUGGLE THAT IS SPLITTING THE *HAN*
TIME IS PRECIOUS. YET KILLING OUR FORMER LORD TO ROB MAKOTO OF HER POWER WOULD BETRAY *BUSHIDŌ*
NOR CAN I KILL MY OWN CHILD

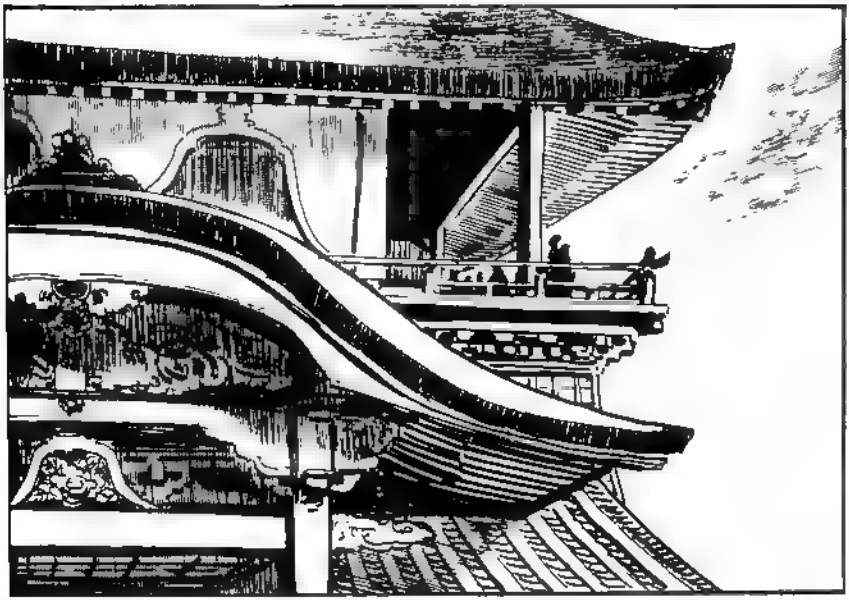
AND THUS I HAVE SOUGHT ONE SUCH AS YOURSELF
TAKING *LIFE*. TAKING *POWER* IN THE END, ARE THEY NOT ONE AND THE SAME? *THE ULTIMATE GOAL* OF THE ASSASSIN?
PLEASE, LEND ME YOUR STRENGTH.

SHISHŪ TOBA

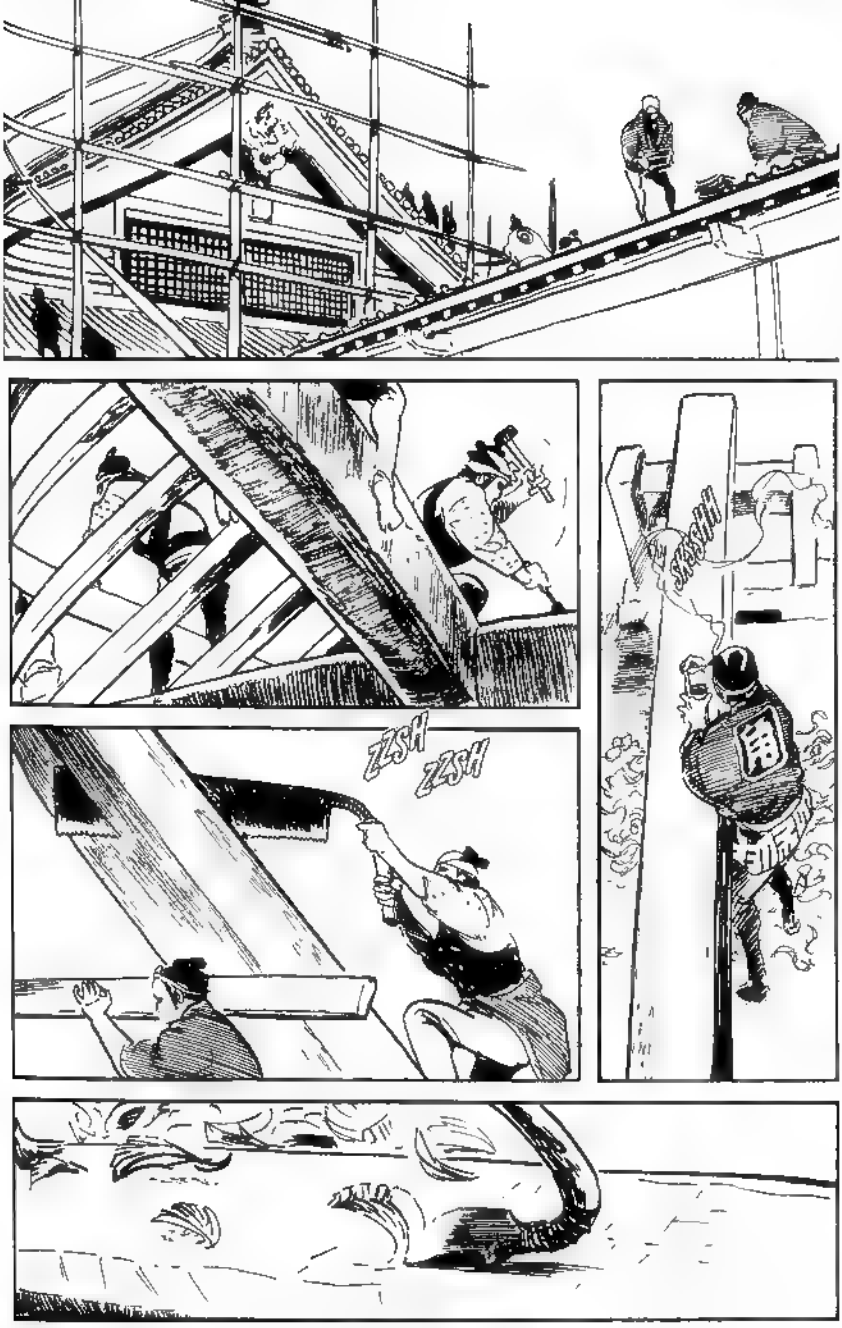


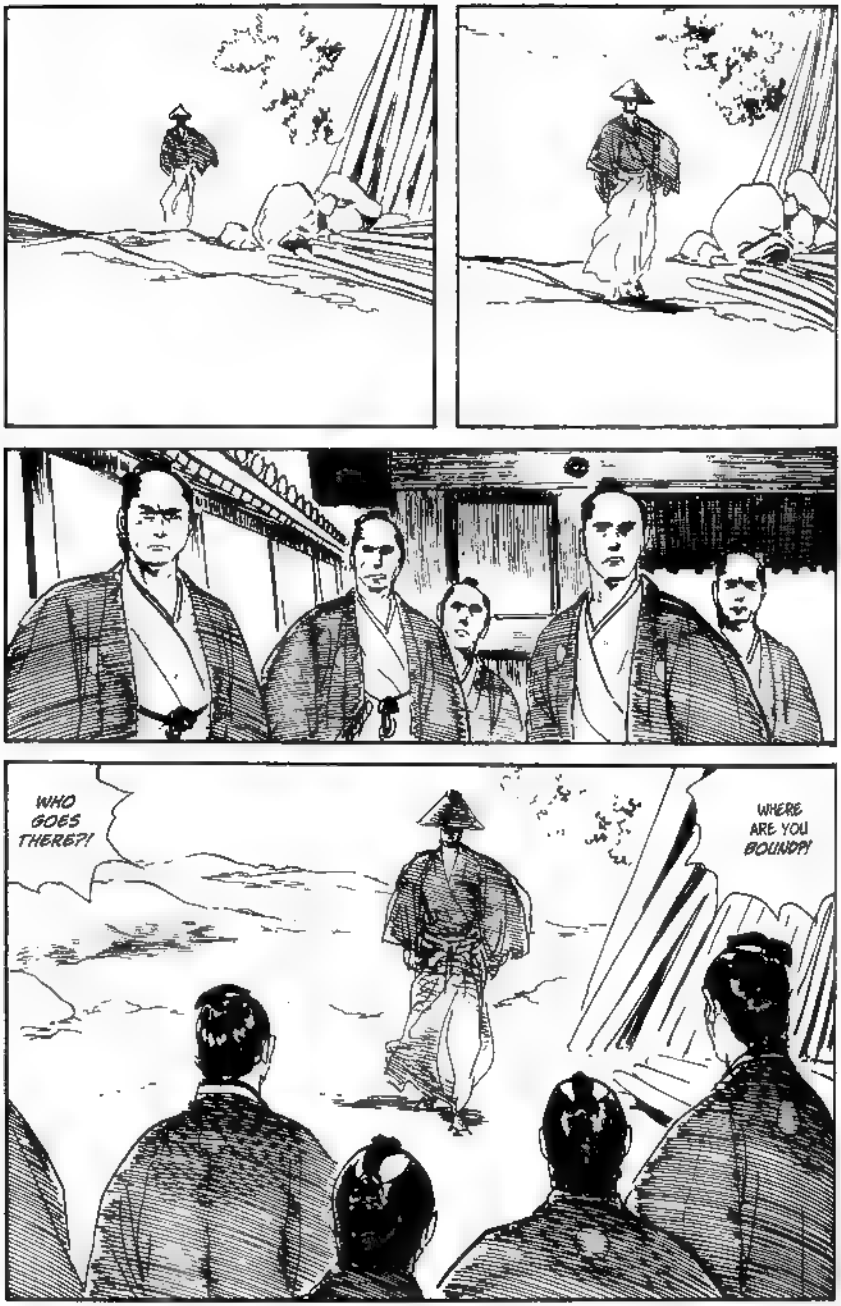
SKRSSSH

TO KILL WITHOUT KILLING
TO RETURN AN EXISTENCE TO NOTHINGNESS AS SURE AS DEATH



SEE, MAMACHIYO? ALL TOBA'S OCEAN AND BAYS.
EVEN THIS BRAND NEW PALACE. ALL FOR YOU!
SHALL WE NAME IT FOR YOU, TOO, MM? THE MAMA PALACE! EH?
HAW HAH HAH!
TOHN TOHN
K-KANG KANG


ZZSH
ZZSH

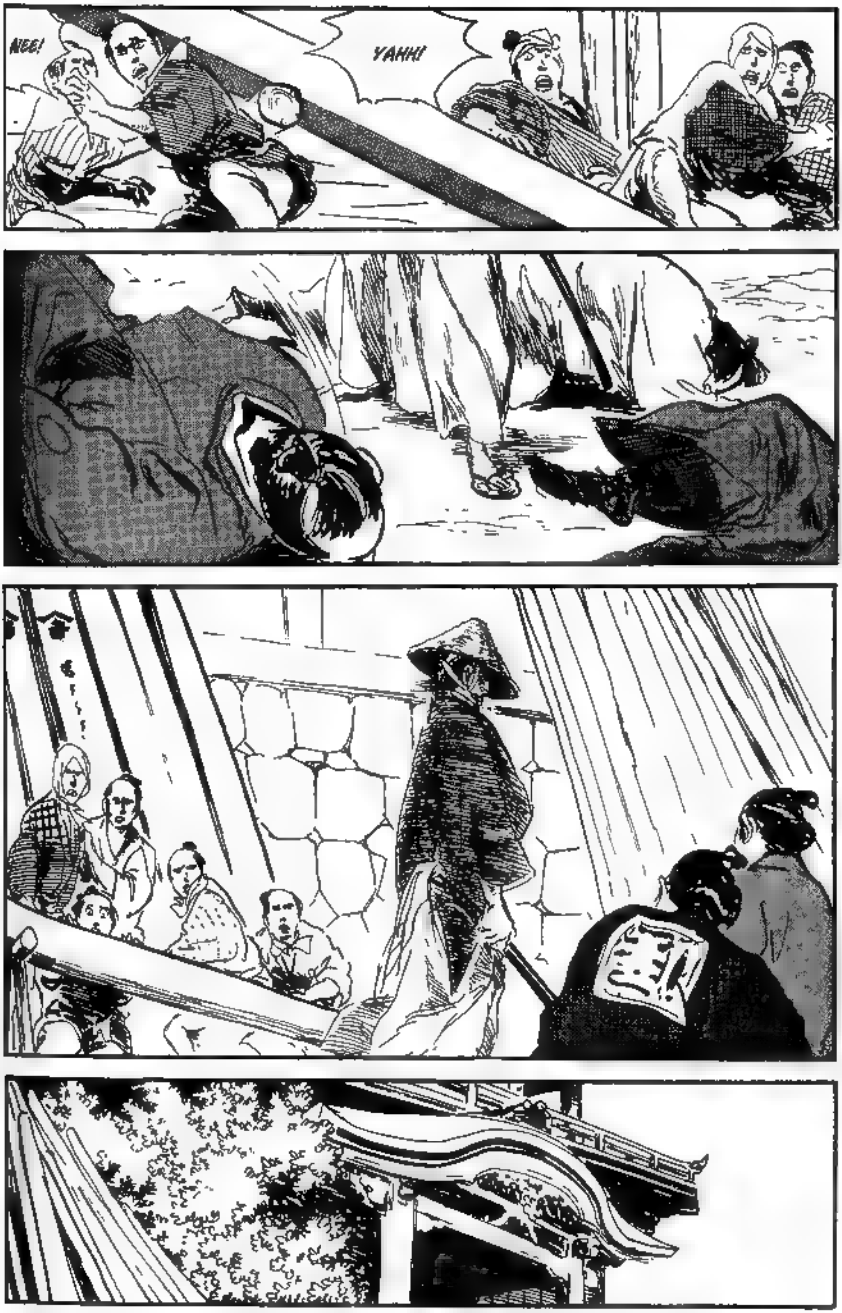

WHO GOES THERE?!
WHERE ARE YOU BOUND?!

INSOLENCE! IDENTIFY YOURSELF!
WHO ARE YOU!
WHY YOU—!
DO YOU KNOW WHERE YOU ARE?!
DAMN!
GFF!
THOKK

HRRUG!

HNGK!
INTRUDER, HALT!
IDENTIFY YOURSELF, DAMN YOU!

FSSHK
SHRAKK
CHUDD


AGE!
YAHH!

OH...?!
INSOLENT CUR! THIS IS NO PLACE FOR YOU!
IDENTIFY YOURSELF!

YOU INTRUDE UPON THE RETIRED LORD OF TOBA HAN, INAGAKI SAIRAN!
WHO ARE YOU, BOY?
ASSASSIN!
LONE WOLF AND CUB!
W-WHAT?!
A-ASSASSIN?!
HYAA!

SHRIK
SHRIK

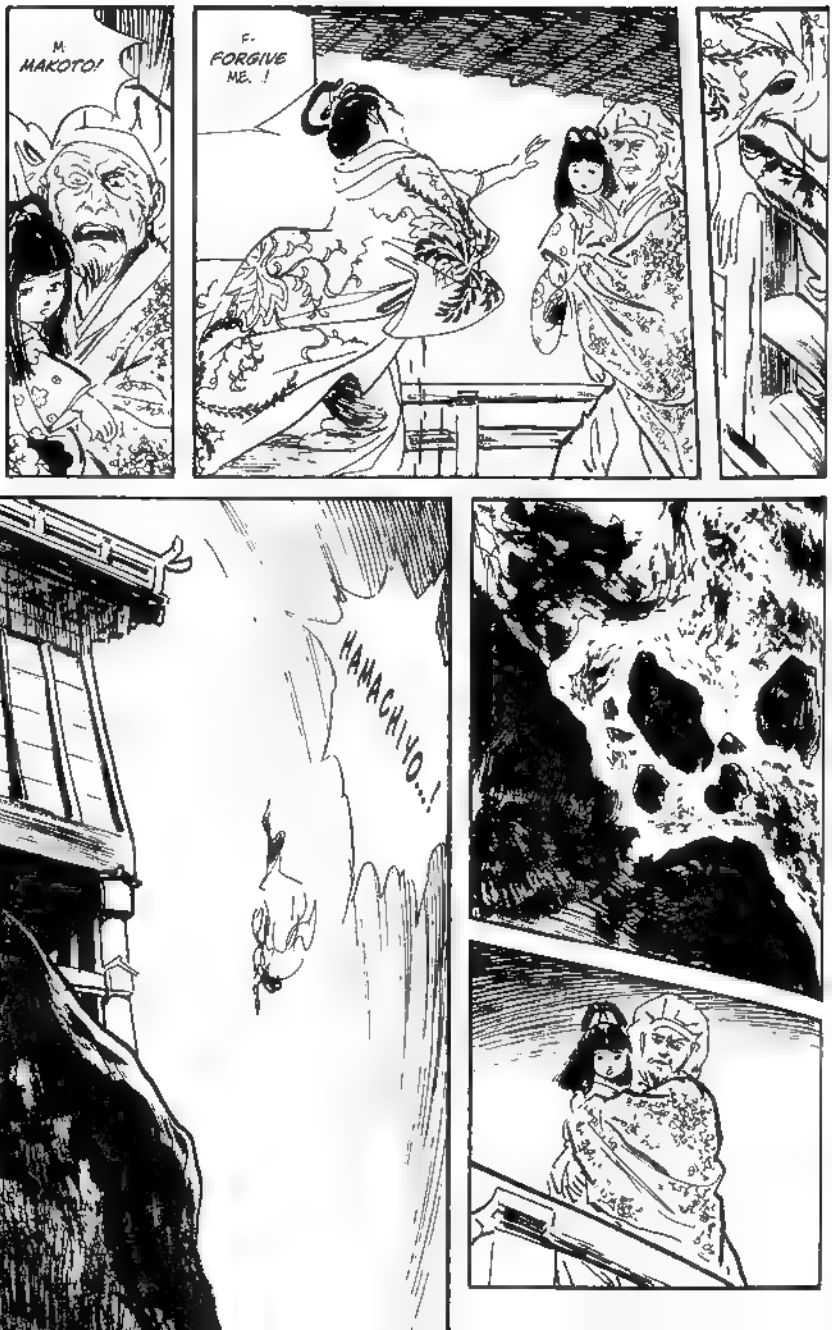
SHAKK
BY ORDER OF MY CLIENT, I AM COME TO KILL EITHER LORD SEIZAN OR THIS CHILD—THE ONE BUT NOT THE OTHER
HRRR!
THE SELECTION TO BE MADE BY THE LADY- SUCH WAS WAKIDA-DONO'S COMMAND
SO! SHALL I SHORTEN THE LIFE OF LORD SEIZAN .?

OR SHALL I KILL THE BOY?!
YOUR WORD DECIDES IT, MY LADY!
WA-WAKIDA ?
WHICH LIFE SHALL BE SAVED?! YOUR ANSWER! NOW!!
I-I CAN'T .?!
ME, DAMN IT! KILL ME!
THIS BOY IS MY PRICELESS TREASURE! KILL ME, I SAY!

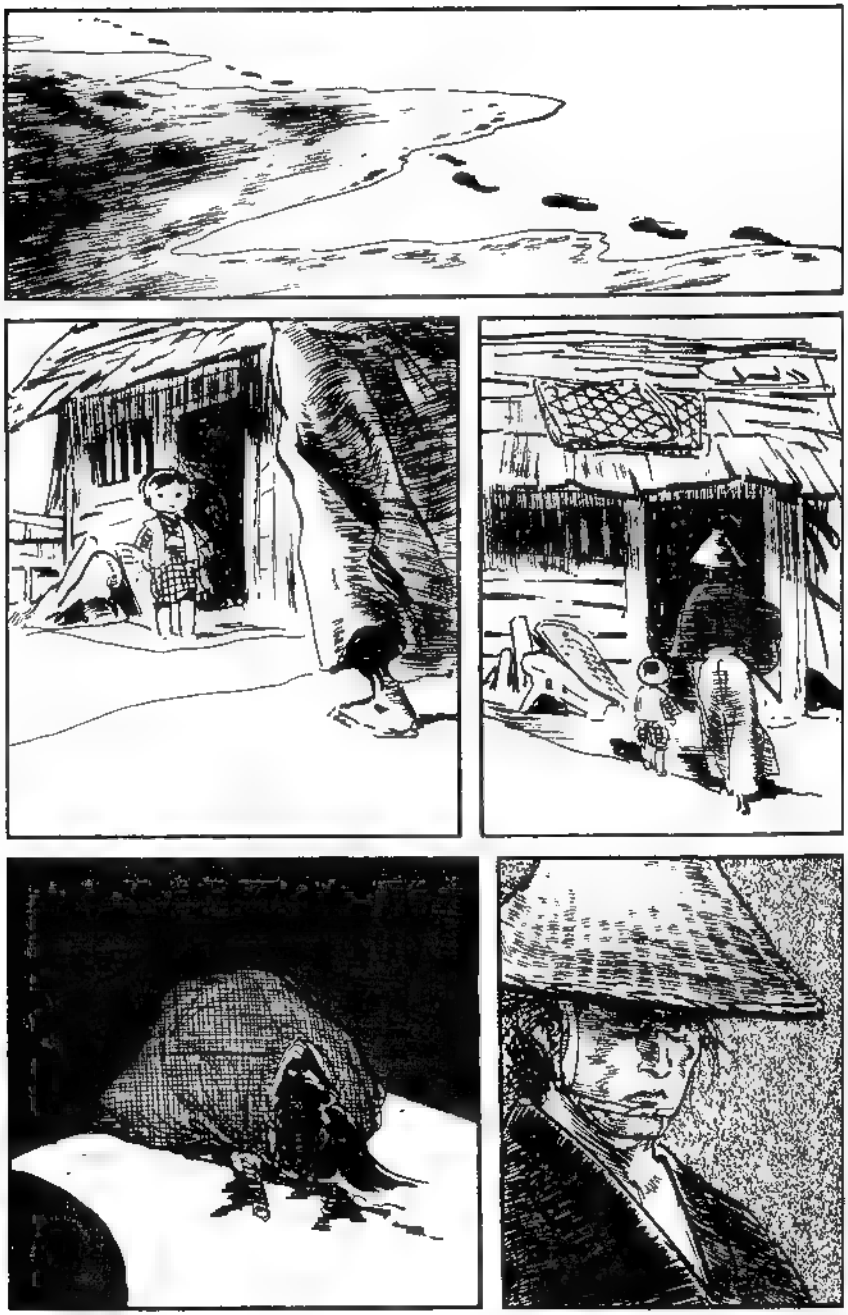
I SEEK AN ANSWER FROM YOUR LADY!
WHICH ...?!
AHH, I
IF I RECEIVE NO ANSWER I SHALL TAKE BOTH THEIR HONORED LIVES!
SO BE IT, THEN! BOTH DIE!

S-STOP...!
HA. HAMA-CHIYO..
YOU SAY TO KILL THE CHILD?!
THAT'S. THAT'S WHAT WAKIDA WANTS.
WHAT THE DEVIL ARE YOU SAYING, MAKOTO?!
K-KILL ME! I COMMAND YOU TO KILL ME!
WAHH!! MAMA! WAAH!
H-HAMACHIYO .
AS WE CAN SEE FROM THE ATTITUDE OF LORD SEIZAN, A LOVING PARENT WILL DEFEND A CHILD TO THE DEATH
E-VEN THE BEASTS OF THE WILD DIE TO PROTECT THEIR OFFSPRING!

YET, THE LOYAL RETAINER MUST PROTECT HER LORD, THOUGH SHE SACRIFICE HER OWN CHILD SUCH IS THE WAY OF FEALTY, THE WAY OF SHIDŌ HOWEVER, THIS IS TRUE ONLY IF THE CHILD IS NOT OF LORD SE ZAN'S BLOOD, AND THUS NOT HIS RIGHTFUL HEIR.
F- FORGIVE ME, MY LORD!
HAMACHIYO. . HAMACHIYO IS WAKIDA'S SON. .
WHAT?! IS IS THIS TRUE?!
FORGIVE ME, MY LORD!
WELL SPOKEN, MY LADY IF I HAD NOT HEARD THOSE WORDS LORD SEIZAN, THE CHILD, AND INDEED YOURSELF
ALL WOULD HAVE DIED BY MY SWORD!
. . . . . !


M.
MAKOTO!
F.
FORGIVE
ME. !
HAMACHIYO..!

NOW I SHALL TAKE THE CHILD'S LIFE.
W-WAIT !
B-BUT HAMACHIYO IS MY CHILD! L-LOOK AT HIM!
YOU CANNOT PROTECT H.M.
DOESN'T HE LOOK JUST LIKE ME. ? THESE. THESE EYES. THIS MOUTH.
JUST LIKE ME. D-DON'T YOU THINK SO?
H-HAMACHIYO IS MY SON! IF IF YOU MUST KILL KILL ME!
NO. HE DOES INDEED LOOK JUST LIKE YOU.
WAAAHN!!
PAPA...!



the sixty-second

A Promise of Potatoes

HEY YOU!! WHERE YOU FROM?!
WHAT'S YER NAME?!
.....
.....

SAY SOMETHIN', PUNK!
FHD
HUH! BUG-EYED, PUFFY-FACED FREAK!
SOMEONE'S STEALIN' THE DRIED PERSIMMONS AND TATERS! BET IT'S YOU!
'FESS UP! THIEF!
POW
WD
YOW!
NGG.
FIGHT US, WILL YA?!
STOMP HIM!

LITTLE CREEP!
AIIEE!!
OWW!
CHOMP
FWAK
KRAK
CHUD
WHOK
FREAK!
HGG!

CUT IT OUT!
PICKING ON LITTLE KIDS AIN'T RIGHT!
COWARDS! IT AIN'T MANLY T' GANG UP ON PEOPLE!
IF YOU'RE GONNA FIGHT, GO AT IT ONE ON ONE!
G'WAN! LOUSY PUNKS!
HEY! YOU FIGHT GOOD FOR A LI'L SQUIRT I LIKE THAT
THAT'S THE WAY BOYS OUGHTTA BE!

WELL? YOU GONNA SAY THANK YOU?
I RESCUED YOU, DIDN'T I?
THAT'S BETTER
YOU GOT IT
HOLD ON!
COME BACK HERE.
JUST BOBBIN' YOUR NOGGIN WON'T CUT IT
WHEN SOMEONE DOES YOU A GOOD TURN, YOU PAY HIM BACK- UNDERSTAND?
. . . . . .
SHEESH. YOU CAN'T TALK OR SOMETHING...?
YOU'RE ONE WEIRD KID, BUT I GUESS YOU UNDERSTAND
NOW LISTEN UP FROM NOW ON, YOU DO WHATEVER I SAY, SEE?
'CAUSE LIKE, I'M THE GUY WHO SAVED YOUR LIFE, RIGHT?

NOW SET YOURSELF DOWN. KNEEL, ALL PROPER-LIKE.

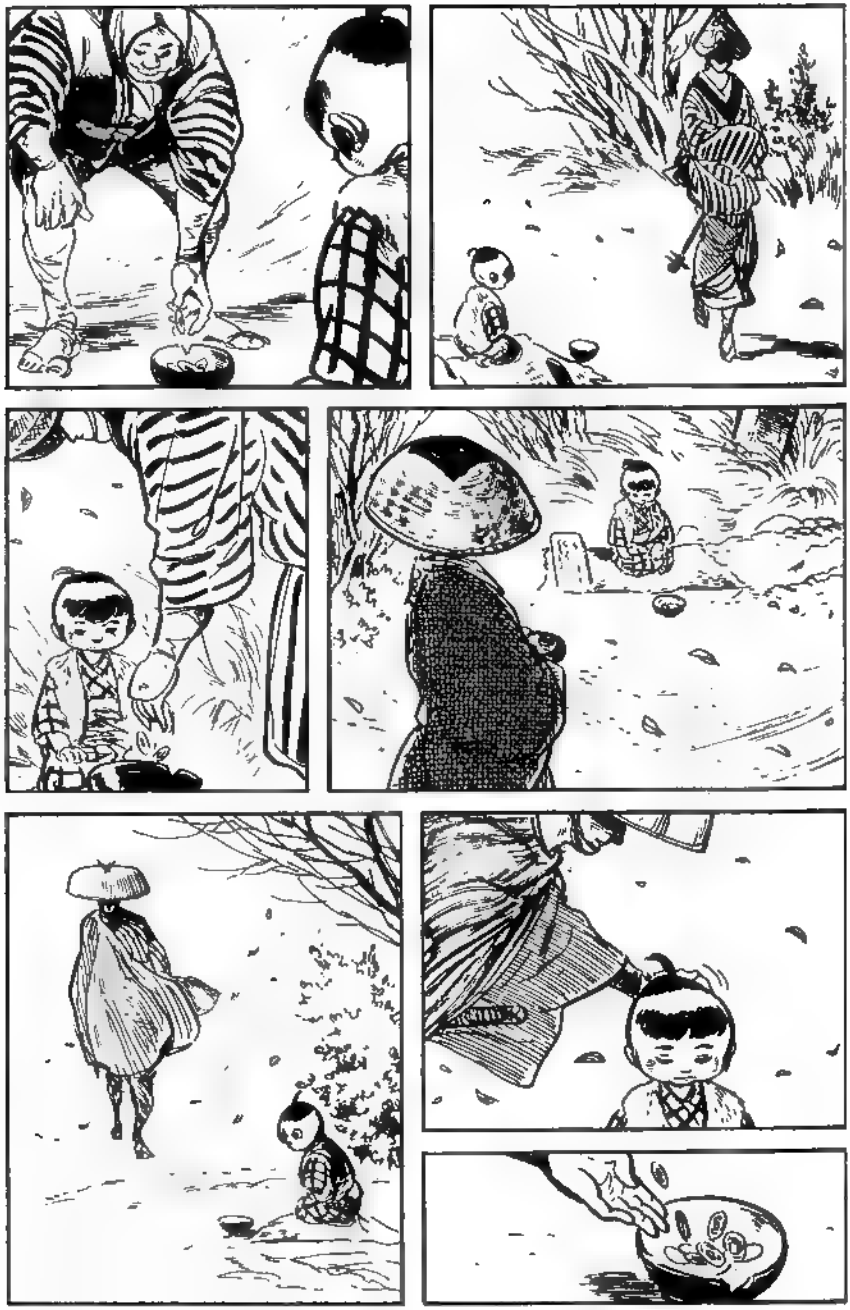
GOOD BOY.
I'VE MADE MONEY OFF A LOT OF KIDS BEFORE, BUT I'VE NEVER MET ONE AS EASY AS YOU, SPORT
WISH ALL BOYS WERE LIKE YOU.

SO ANYWAY - YOU KNEEL, SEE, AND LOOK DOWN AT THE BOWL

RIGHT! THAT'S PERFECT
YOU FOLLOW ORDERS SO GOOD, IT'S CREEPY

*BOYS FOLKS IS SICK AND KAN'T MOVE OR GIT FOOD PLEESE HELP. THANK U.

POOR THING!
HO..? WHAT'S THIS?
A POOR LITTLE CHILD OUT IN THE COLD?
HOW PITIFUL..



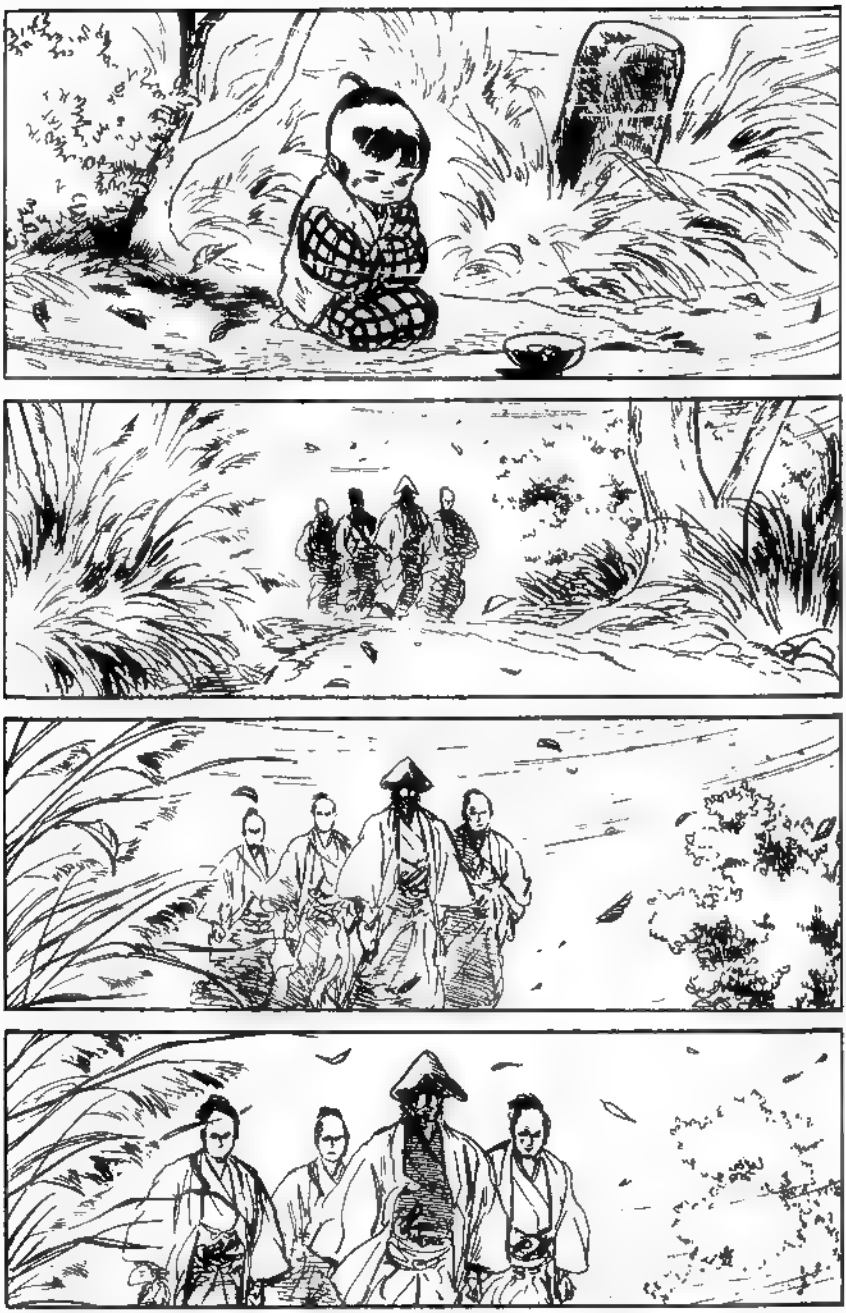
HO HO HO!
I BET YOU'RE STARVING, RIGHT? I'LL FEED YOU SOMETHING YUMMY!
HEH, HEH!
YOU'RE A GREAT KID, Y'KNOW THAT?

HEH, HEH.
FOOD FOR THE TAKING, DRINKING MONEY JUST ROLLING ON IN- WOO-HOO!
WAY THIS WORLD WORKS IF YOU'VE GOT A GOOD NOGGIN
AND SOME QUICK HANDS..
YOU CAN KICK RIGHT BACK AND ENJOY LIFE
HEH, HEH, HEH!
THESE TATERS ARE REALLY YUMMY
SSSIZZ
PO- TA-TERS WANNA TRY ONE?
BUT LISTEN UP! AFTER YOU EAT, YOU GOTTA SIT AND MAKE MORE MONEY, OKAY?
GOTTA PROMISE!

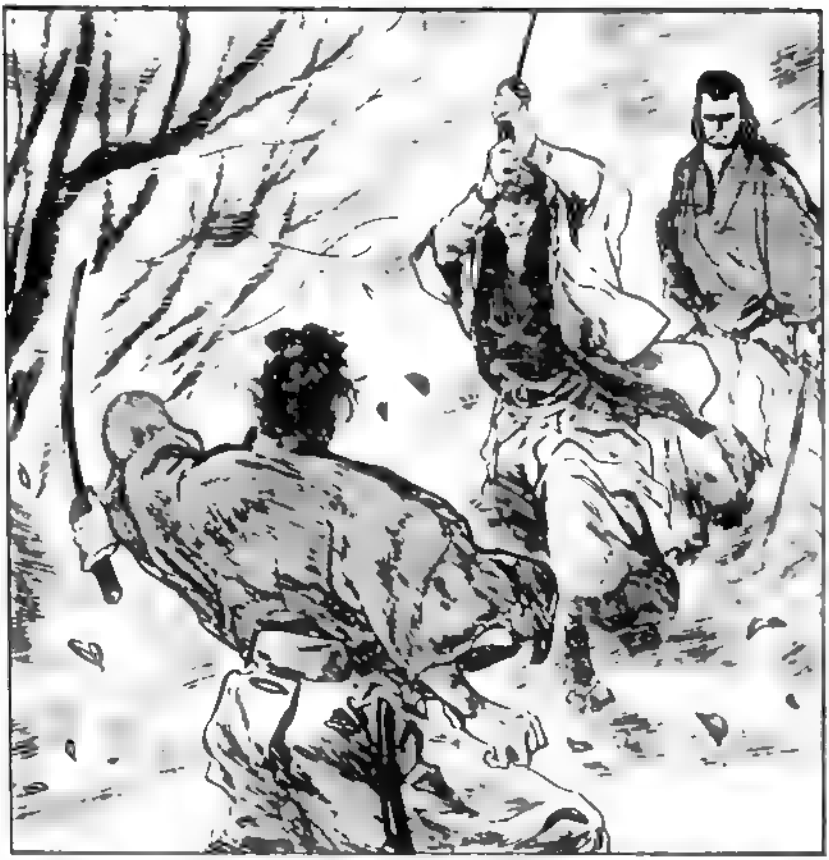
LIKE THEY SAY .ONE MEAL, ONE DEBT
IF YOU SCARF SOMEONE'S FOOD, THEN YOU GOTTA KEEP YOUR PROMISE
SSSSS
PFFT
PFFT
HOT, HUH? BETTER PEEL IT FIRST
YUMMY .?
BETTER SEND HIM PACKING AFTER I GET A BIT MORE WORK OUT OF HIM
DON'T WANT NOBODY SAYING I'M A KIDNAPPER
IF YOU WANT KIDS TO DO WHAT YOU SAY, YOU GOTTA SWEET-TALK 'EM. SHOUT OR BLOW UP AND YOU LOSE 'EM. BUTTER 'EM UP, WIN 'EM OVER, AND THEY'LL DO ANYTHING.
STILL. THIS LITTLE GUY'S SOMETHING SPECIAL.

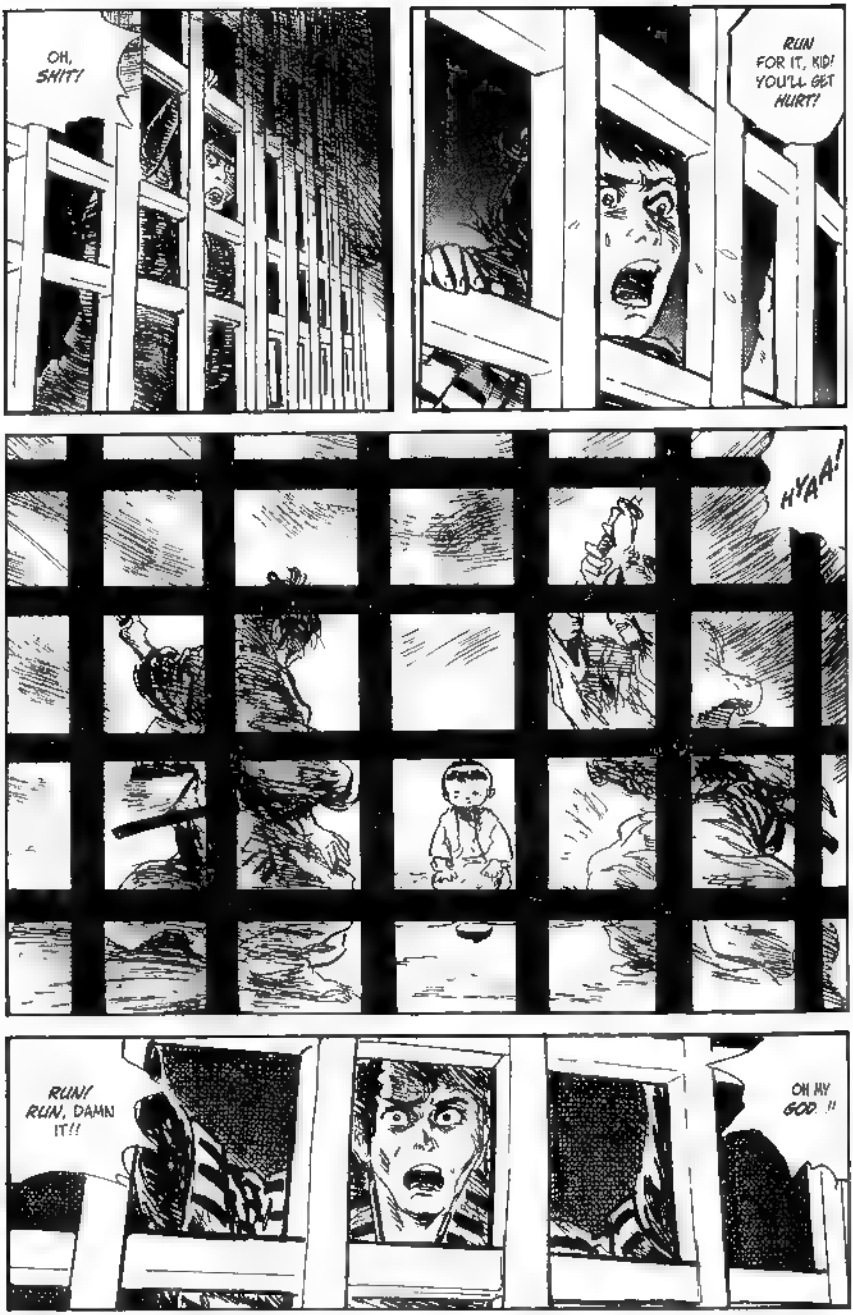
BET I COULD TEACH HIM TO SNEAK MONEY AND STUFF OUTTA HOUSES.
MUST BE SOME PEASANT KID HMM. THOSE SORRY CLODHOPPERS JUST BROUGHT IN THE HARVEST THEY SHOULD BE FLUSH ABOUT NOW.
HEH, HEH, HEH. DO I KNOW HOW TO USE KIDS OR WHAT?

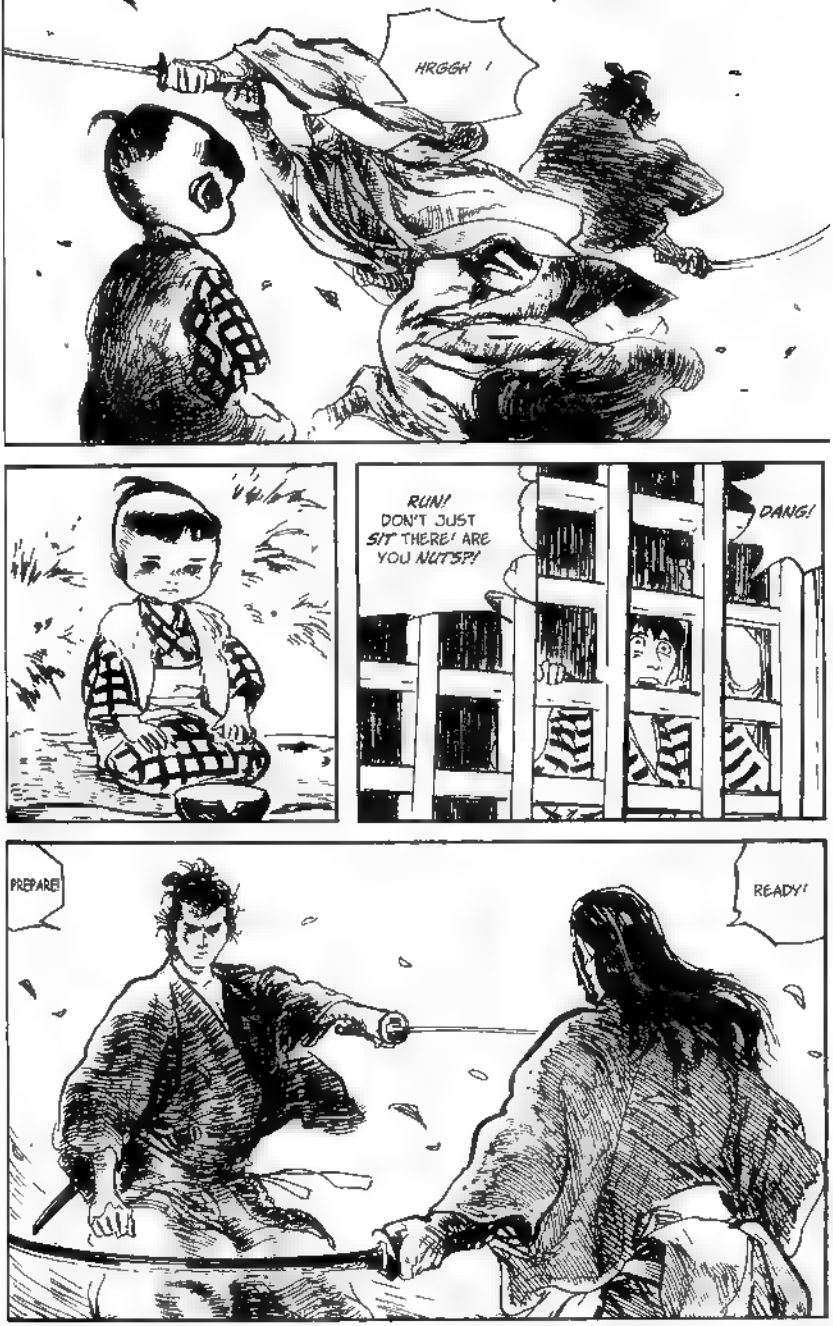
A NICE FULL STOMACH, AND MONEY ROLLING IN WHILE I SLEEP IT OFF. TRY BEATING *THAT!*



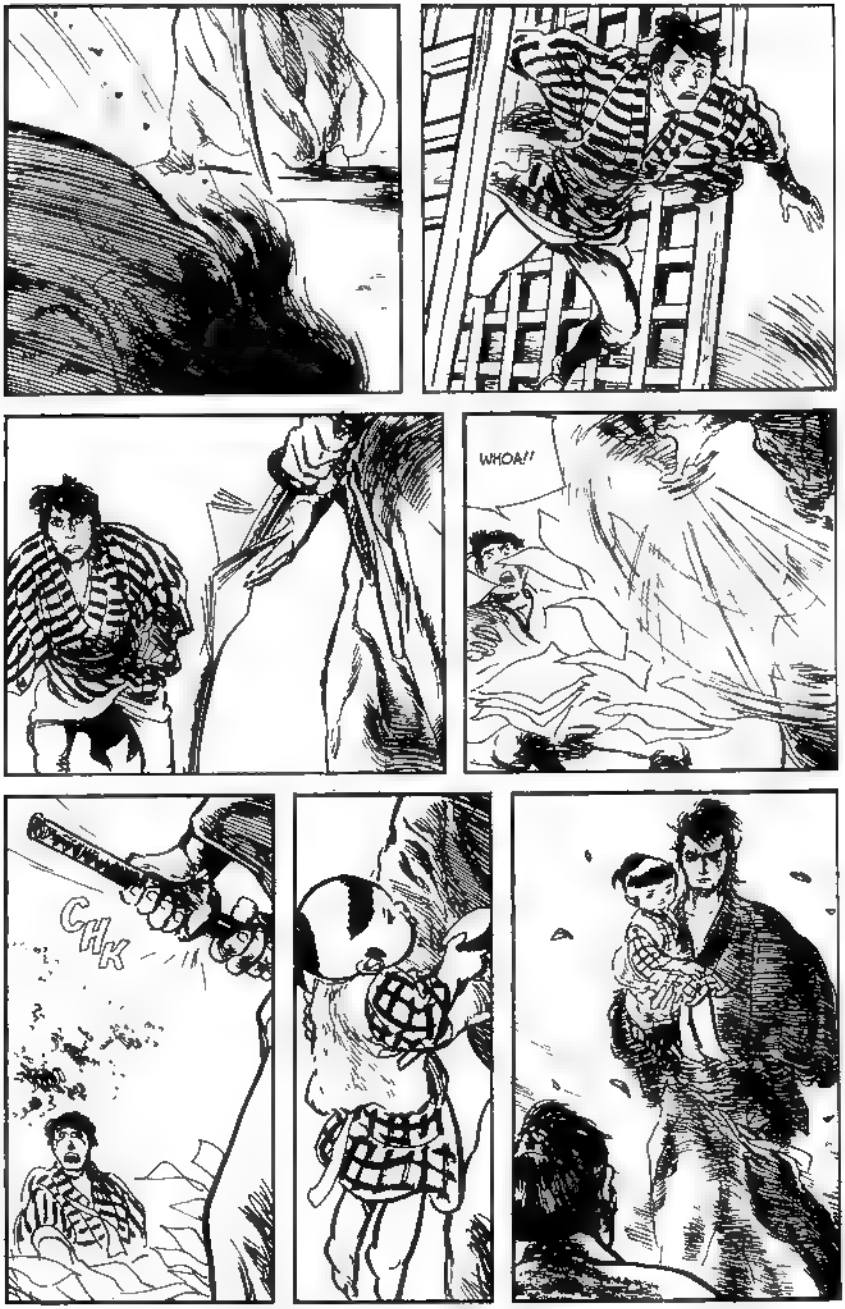
WHO ARE YOU?
ASSASSIN.
LONE WOLF AND CUB!
AUGHH!!




OH, SHIT!
RUN FOR IT, KID! YOU'LL GET HURT!
HYAA!
RUN! RUN, DAMN IT!!
OH MY GOD !!


HRGGH !
RUN!
DON'T JUST
SIT THERE! ARE
YOU NUTS?!
DANG!
PREPARE!
READY!

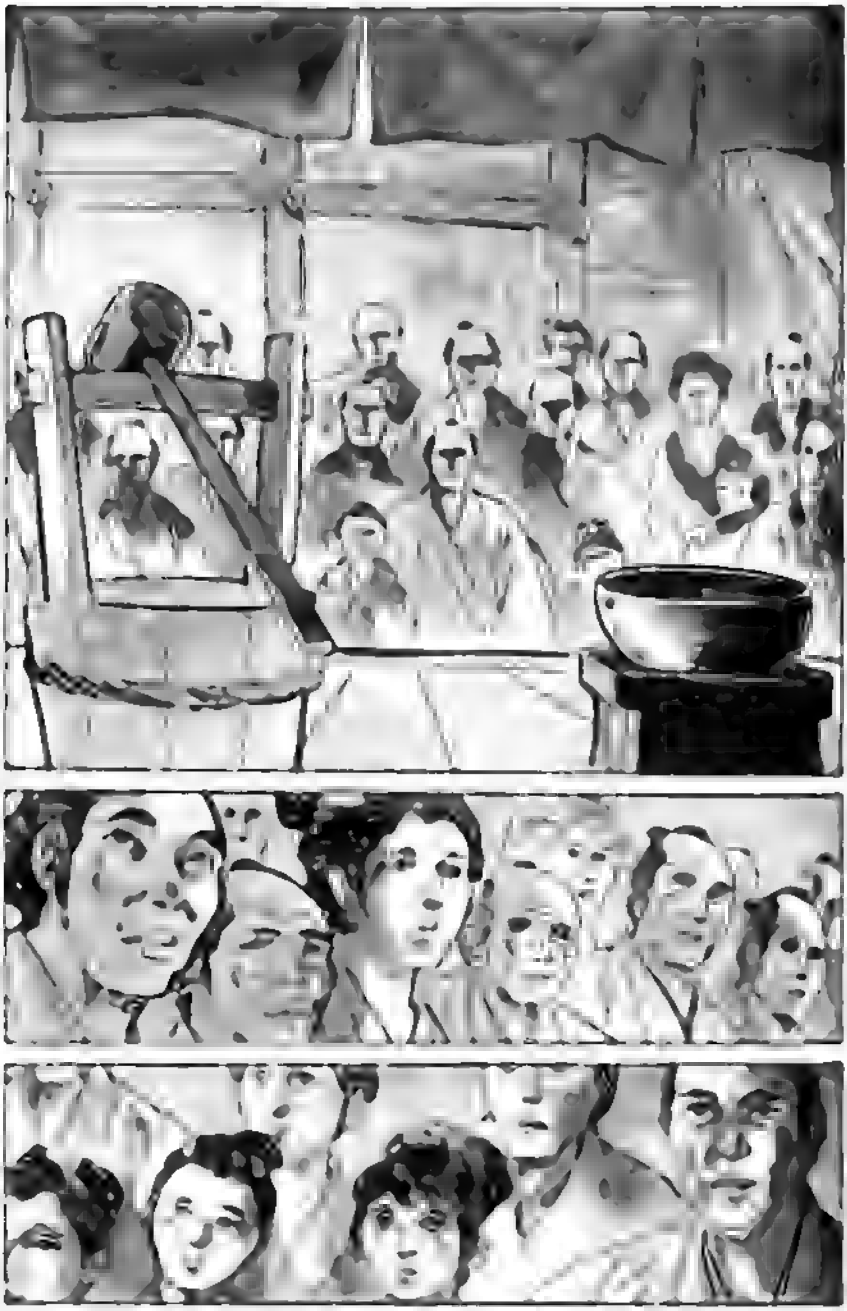
AKK


WHOA!!
CHK

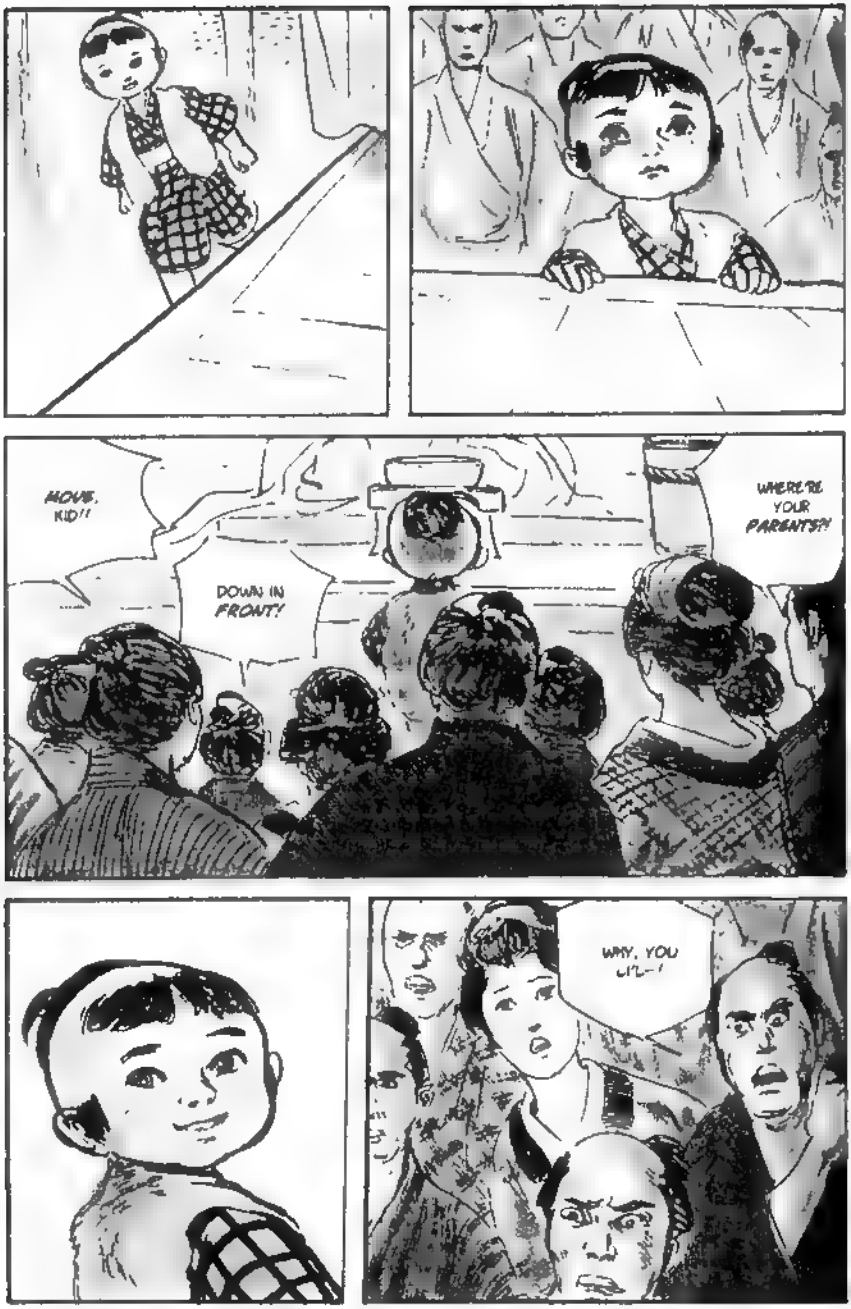
N-NO! D-DON'T K-K-K!—
HUH? HUH?! WHAT THE HELL...?!

the sixty-third

Wife Killer



..BEHOLD!
NINJA HIJUTSU,
THE SECRET MAGIC
OF FIRE FROM


MOVE, KID!!
DOWN IN FRONT!
WHERE'RE YOUR PARENTS?!
WHY, YOU LIT-!

LITTLE BOY ?
COME UP HERE
COME ON!

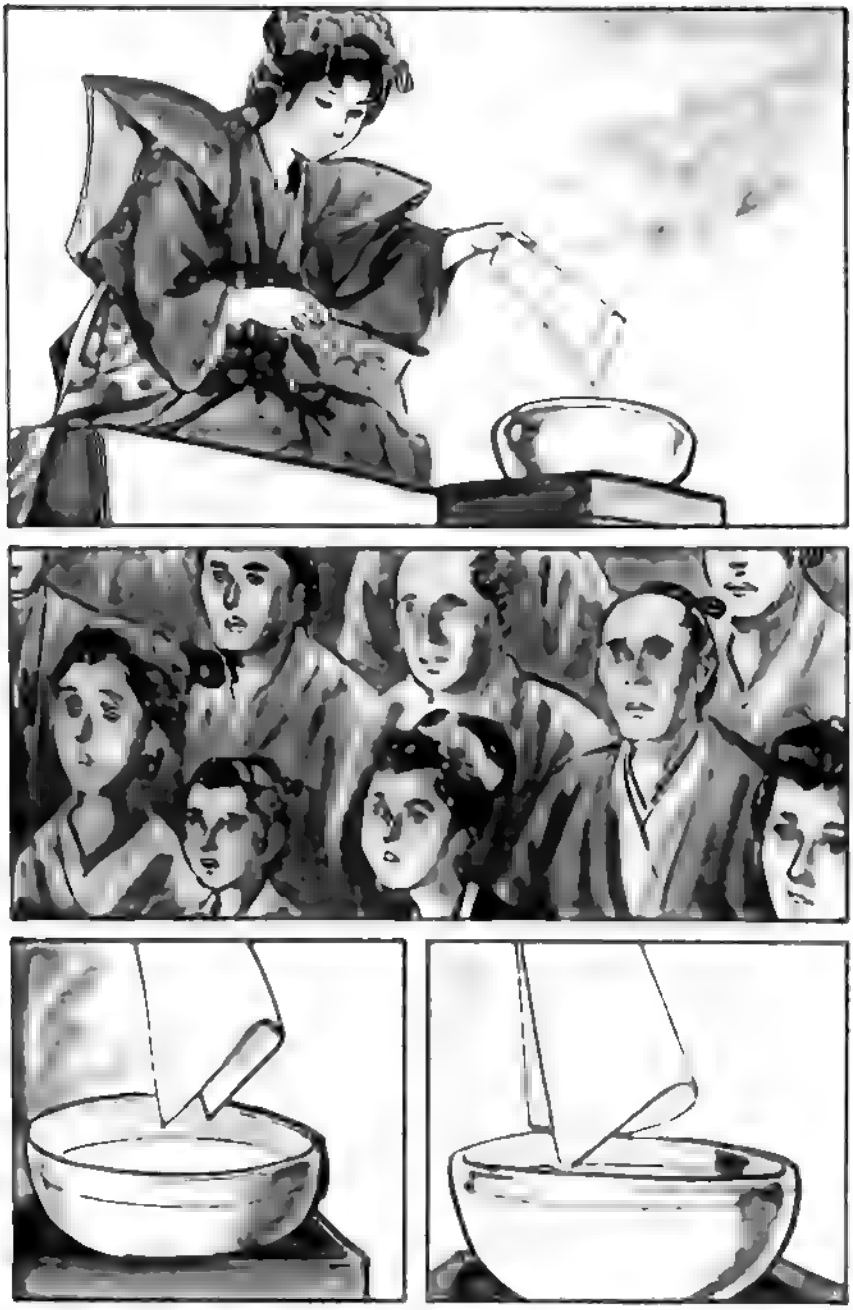
I DON'T KNOW WHOSE CHILD THIS IS.
BUT PLEASE LET ME *BORROW* HIM FOR A FEW MOMENTS!
NOW THEN, YOUNG MAN. PLEASE *DRINK* THIS.

IF YOU DRINK IT
I'LL GIVE YOU— THIS!
FWSS

NOW. PLEASE DRINK.
AS YOU SEE, PURE WATER—COOL AND SWEET

I SHALL
POUR THE WATER INTO
MY EMPTY
BOWL

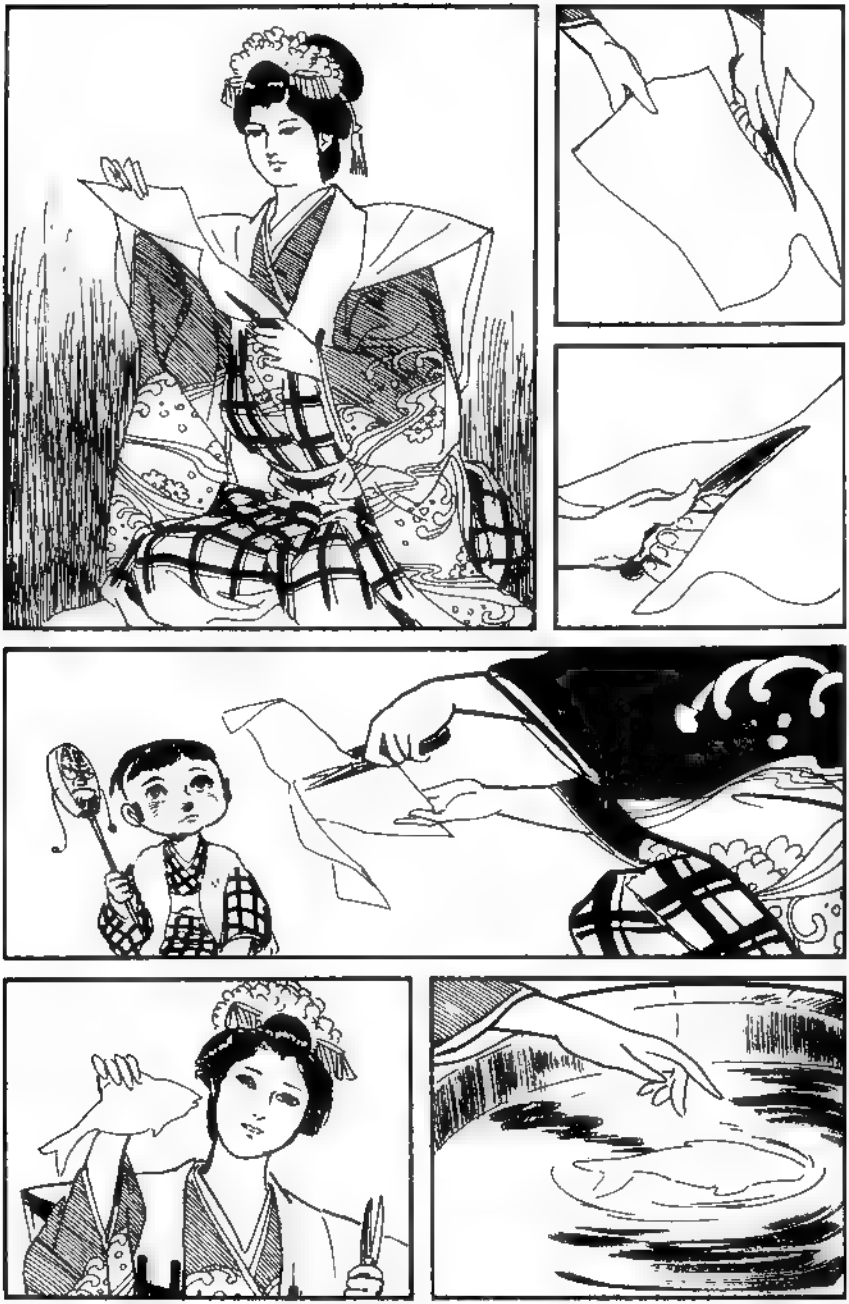
READY



BRAVO! NORONJI HÖYA!
THE PRINCESS OF MAGICIANS!
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP

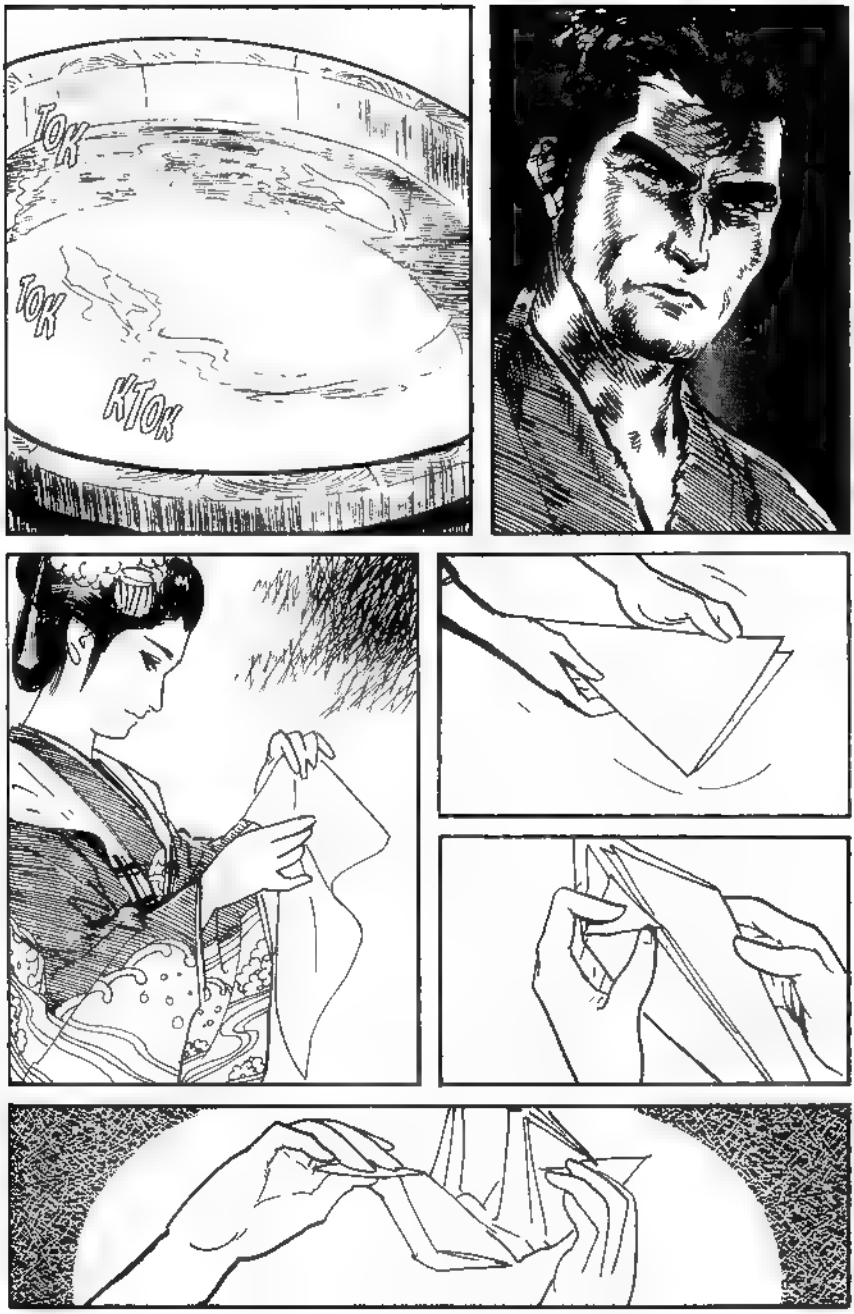
AND NOW, PREPARE YOURSELF FOR NORONJI HŌYA'S MAGIC OF THE CENTURY! THE SUPERNATURAL FISH AND THE BURNING CRANE!
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
WELL! PLEASE ALLOW ME TO BORROW YOUR CHILD A LITTLE LONGER!
KAW HAW! LOOK AT 'IM!
HO HO HO HOH
BWA HAW HAW!
HANG IN THERE, KIDDO!
HAK HAH HAH!

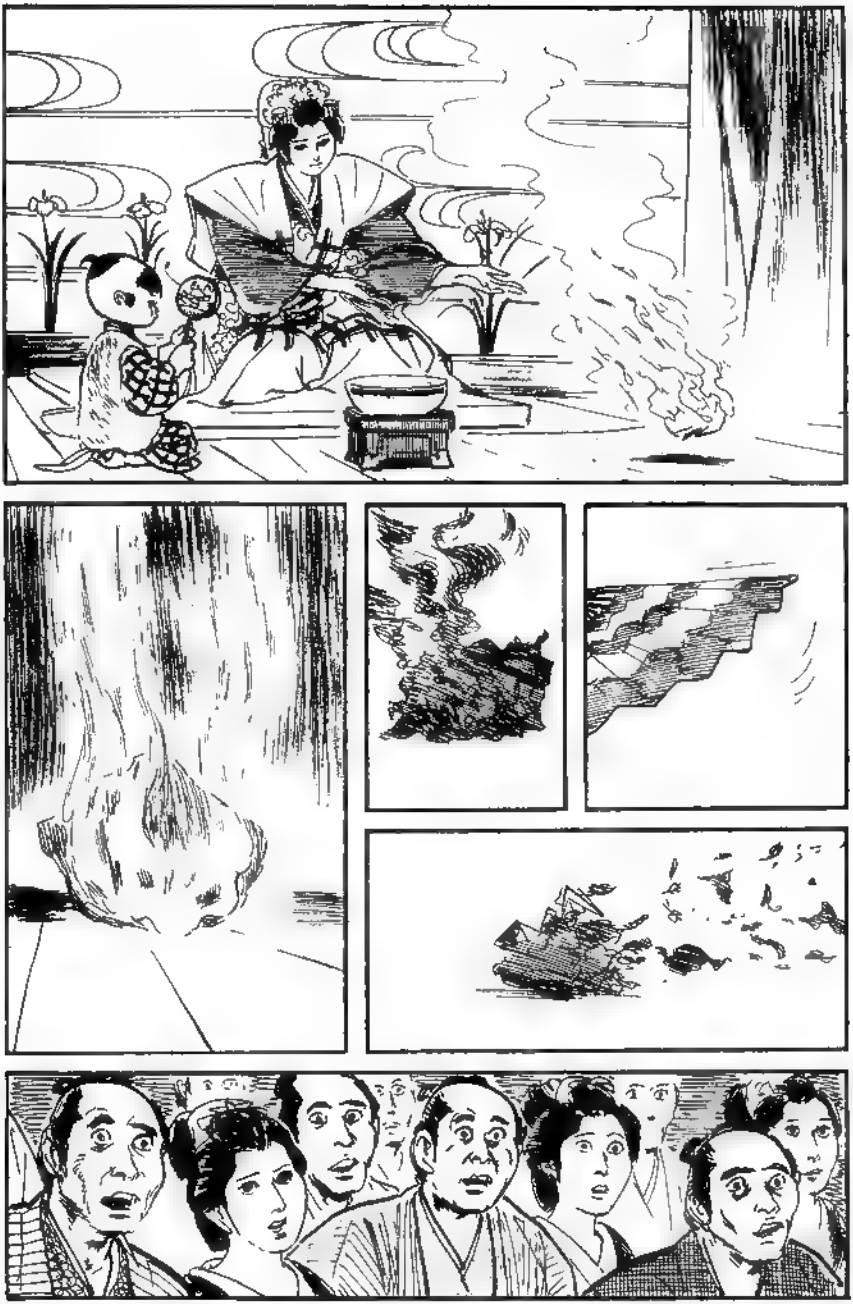
AND NOW, YOUNG SIR, I WANT YOU TO WASH YOUR FACE ALL SHINING CLEAN.
IT MIGHT BE COLD, BUT YOU'RE TOUGH, YES?
FWIT
TOK KTOK TOK
IF YOU WASH YOUR FACE, YOU CAN HAVE THIS— REALLY!
SO, AS YOU SEE, PLAIN WATER. NO TRICKS, NO SECRETS.
TOK KTOK TOK

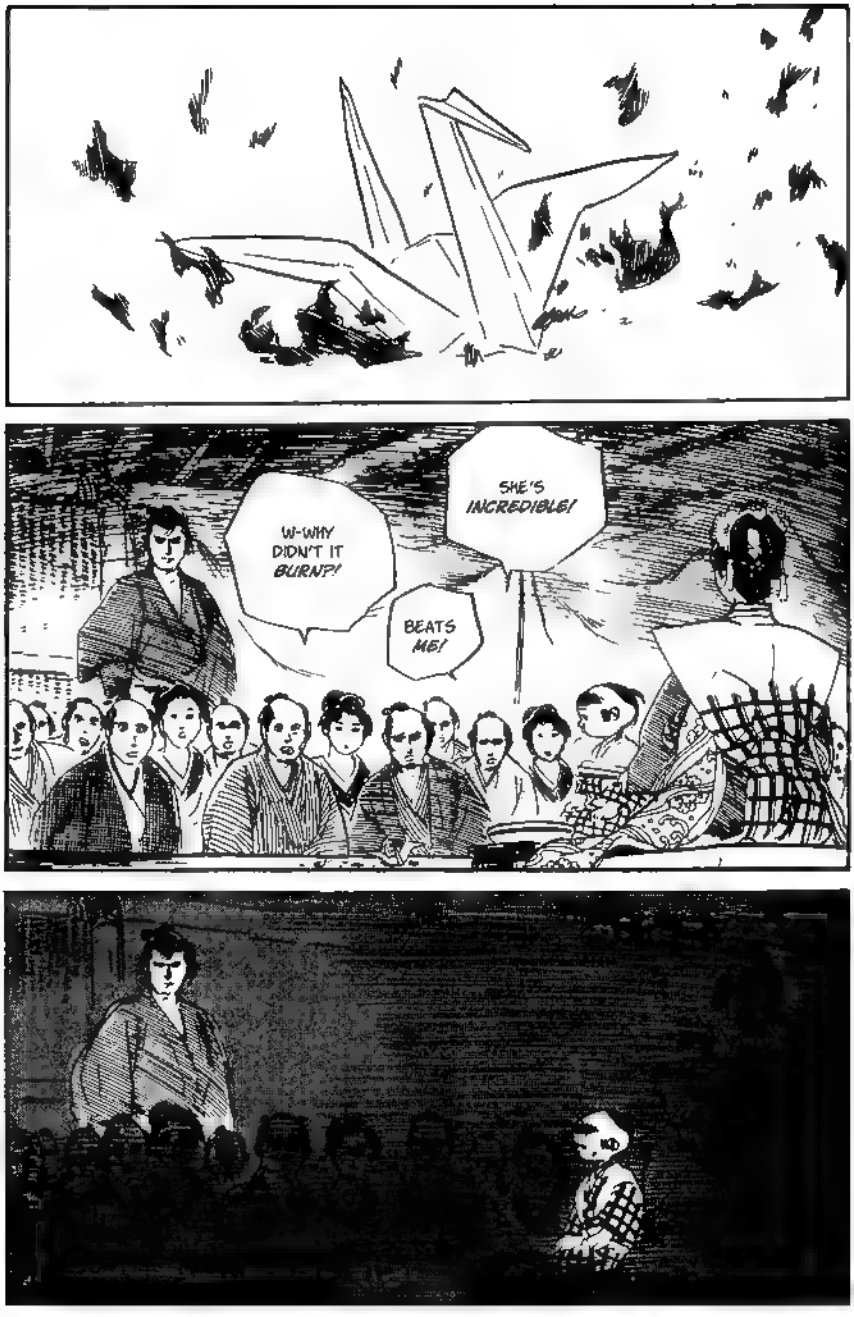


LORDY! A PAPER FISH.
..AND IT'S SWIMMIN'!
P! HOW THE DICKENS...?
THERE BE STRANGE THINGS IN HEAVEN AND EARTH!

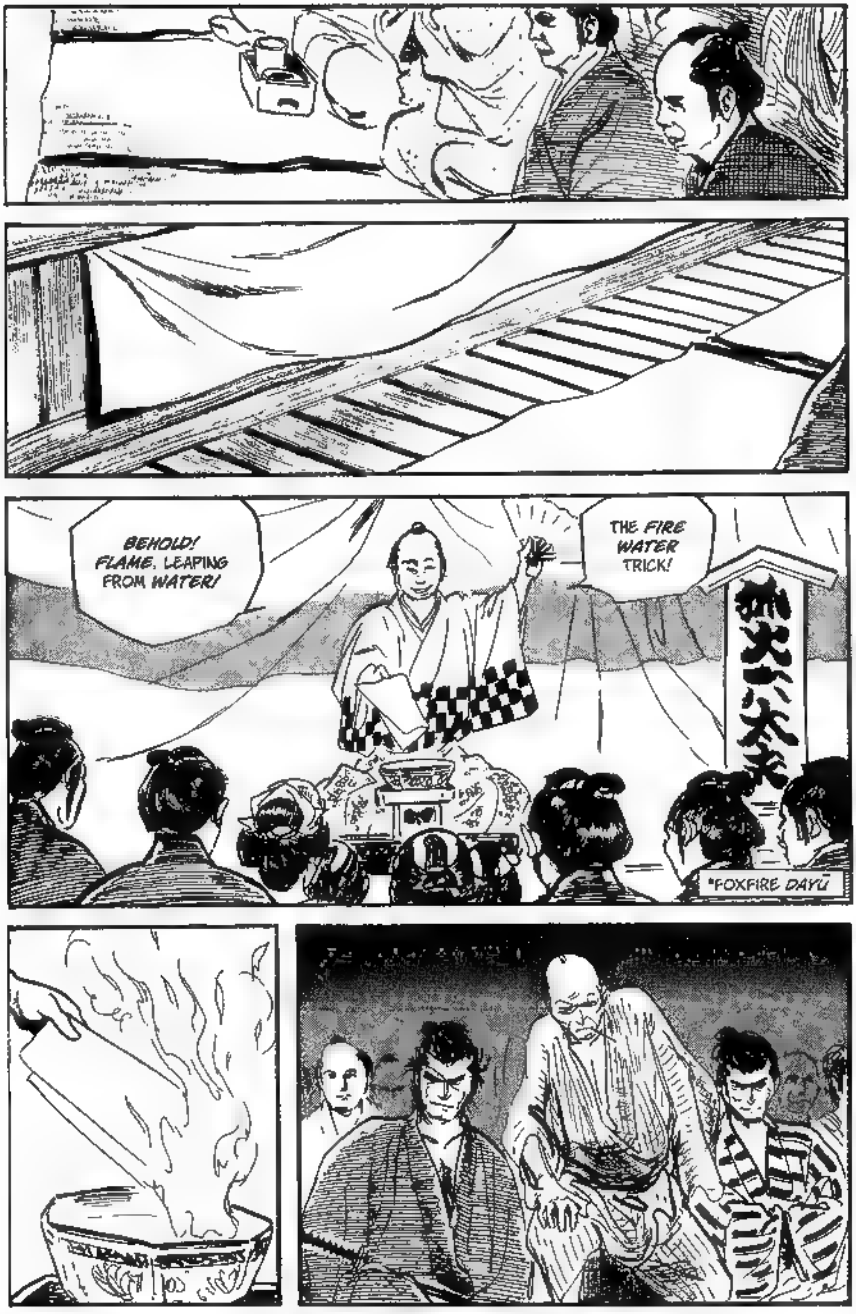
BEHOLD! A PAPER FISH, SWIMMING TO THE BEAT OF THIS LITTLE BOY'S DRUM!
TOK
TOK
TOK
KTOK
TOK


TOK
TOK
KTOK

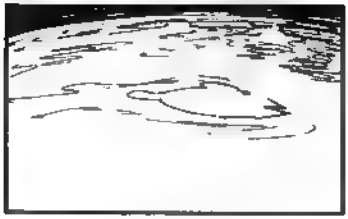


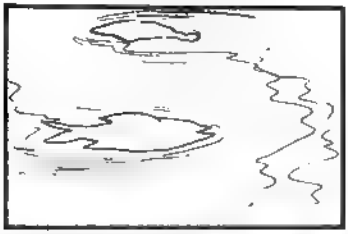

W-WHY DIDN'T IT BURN?
SHE'S INCREDIBLE!
BEATS ME!

THEY CALL HIM KAPPA MASA, THE "WIFE KILLER"
IT'S A BIT OF A PUN, YOU SEE? PEOPLE CALL US MAGICIANS TESAI, OR "HAND WIVES." SO IF MAGIC IS THE WIFE OF OUR HANDS, THEN KILLING THAT WIFE IS DEATH ITSELF TO A MAGICIAN.
BUT KAPPA MASA TAKES NO HUMAN LIVES. NO, WHAT WE MEAN BY WIFE KILLING.
IS TO EXPOSE THE TRICKERY BEHIND THE MAGIC.


BEHOLD! FLAME, LEAPING FROM WATER!
THE FIRE WATER TRICK!
*FOXFIRE DAYŪ

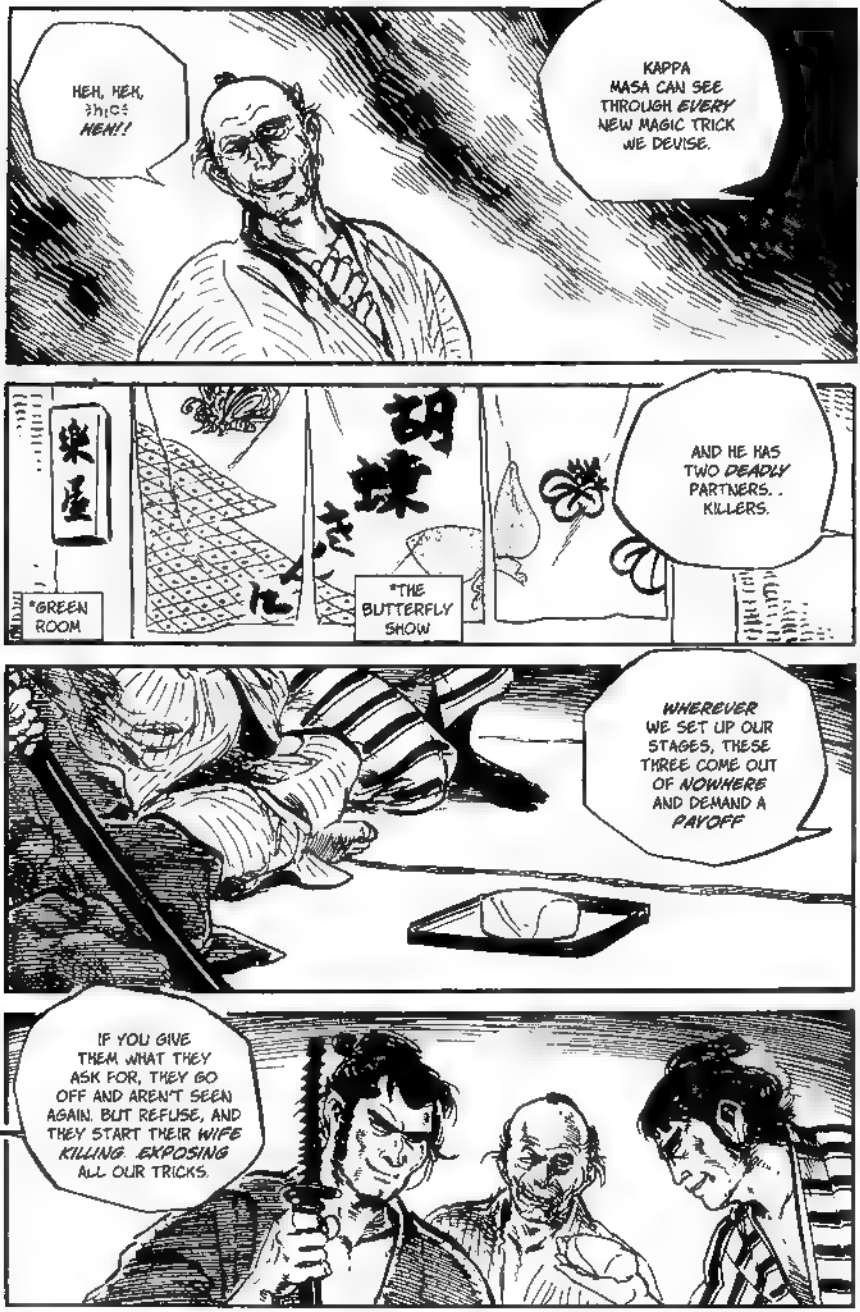
YA CALL YERSELF A *MAGICIAN*, YA SNEAKY LI'L *VARMINTY!*
I'VE HAD IT UP T' HERE WITH YER DAMN *FIRE WATER!*
YA JES' FILL UP 'BOUT *EIGHTY PERCENT* A' THET BOWL, SEE? THEN, IN THE DRY PART, WHERE FOLK KIN'T *SEE*...
slurp
shice
..YA PASTE ON A BIT A' *SMOKELESS INCENSE* WITH POMADE, SEE, AND LIGHT THE *PAPER* WITH IT! A DAMN *KID'S* TRICK, THET ONE!





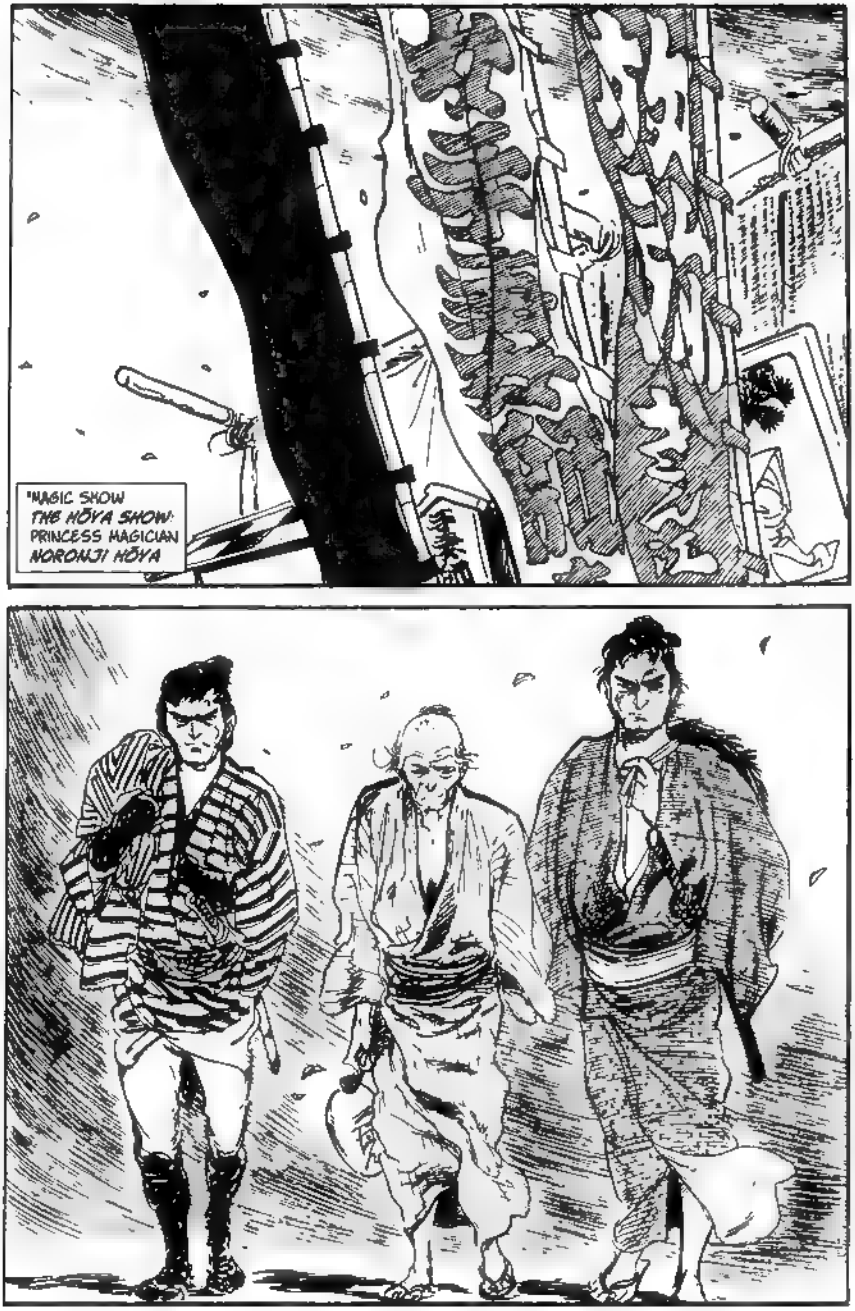
GIMME A BREAK! hic
I AIN'T DUMB ENOUGH TO FALL FOR THET! urp
hic
YA GET SOME CAMPHOR, SEE, BALL IT UP WITH GLUE, 'N STICK IT THE PAPER hic
THEN ANY OL' PAPER'LL DO THET! urp
AH!!

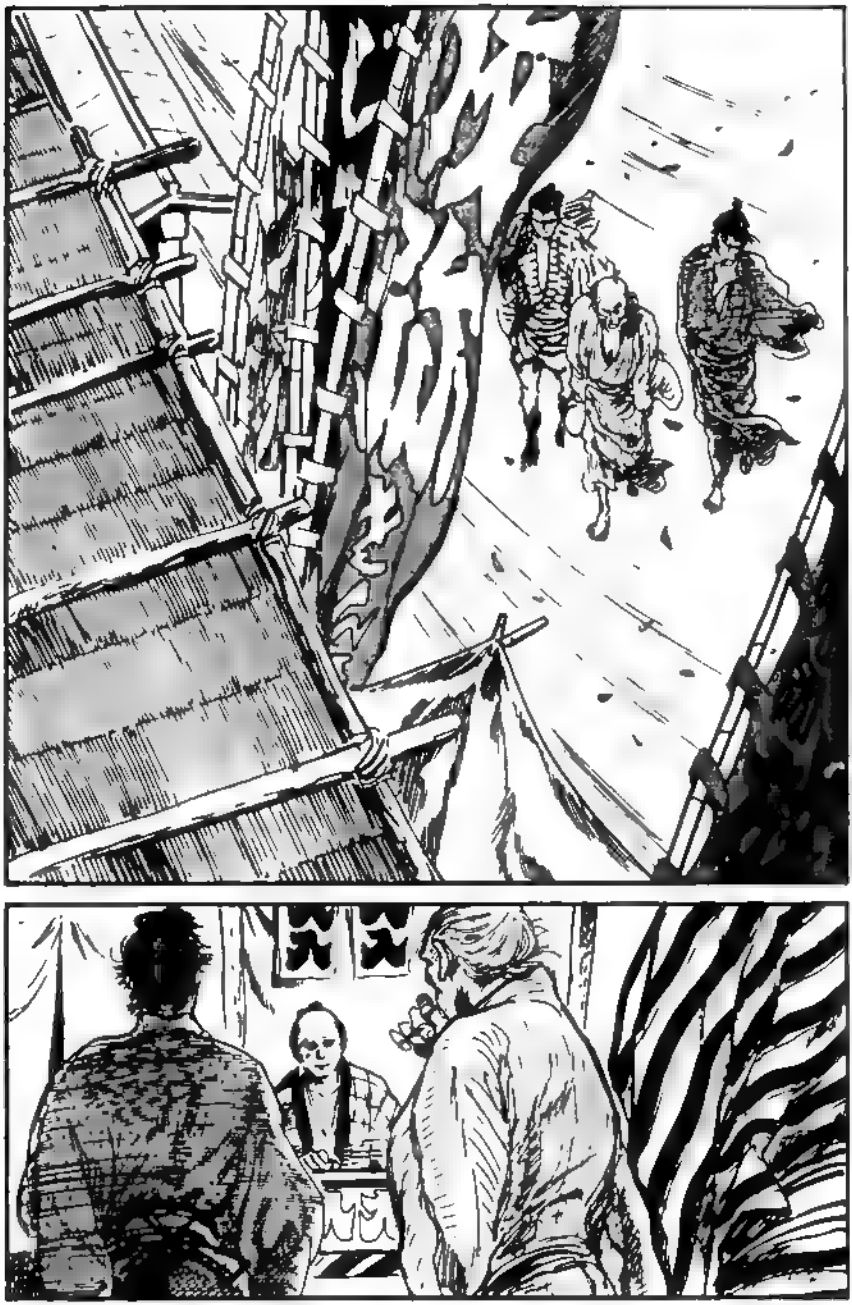
YA SCRAPE OFF DEVIL'S ROOT POWDER WITH A HORSE RADISH SCRAPER, SEE, AND PAINT THE PAPER WITH IT ALL OVER.
MAKE ORIGAMI OUTTA THET, AND IT'LL NEVER BURN. TRY IT AT HOME, FOLKS!
NICE


HEH, HEK, THIS HEH!!
KAPPA MASA CAN SEE THROUGH EVERY NEW MAGIC TRICK WE DEVISE.
楽屋
*GREEN ROOM
胡蝶
*THE BUTTERFLY SHOW
AND HE HAS TWO DEADLY PARTNERS. . KILLERS.
WHEREVER WE SET UP OUR STAGES, THESE THREE COME OUT OF NOWHERE AND DEMAND A PAYOFF
IF YOU GIVE THEM WHAT THEY ASK FOR, THEY GO OFF AND AREN'T SEEN AGAIN. BUT REFUSE, AND THEY START THEIR WIFE KILLING. EXPOSING ALL OUR TRICKS.

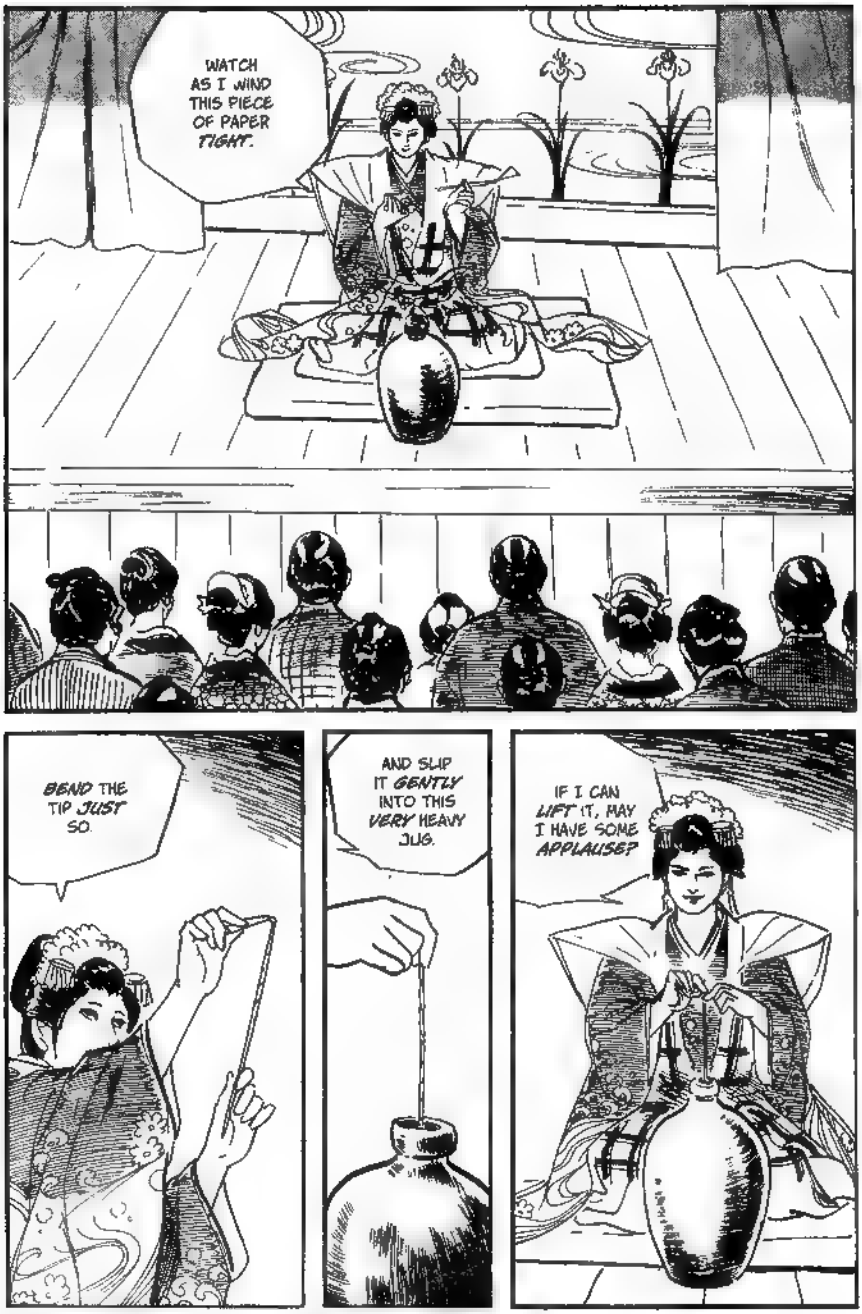
THEN WORD GETS AROUND. THESE *RUFFIANS* ARE *RUINING* THE MAGIC BUSINESS.
IF IT WAS JUST KAPPA MASA *ALONE*, WE COULD HANDLE HIM. BUT THE LOCAL *OYABUN* WON'T INTERVENE...
...AND WITH THOSE *THUGS* MISHUKU-NO-MATSUGORŌ AND AYAKARI-NO-KANJŪRŌ *PROTECTING* HIM..

KLAP
KLAP
KLAP

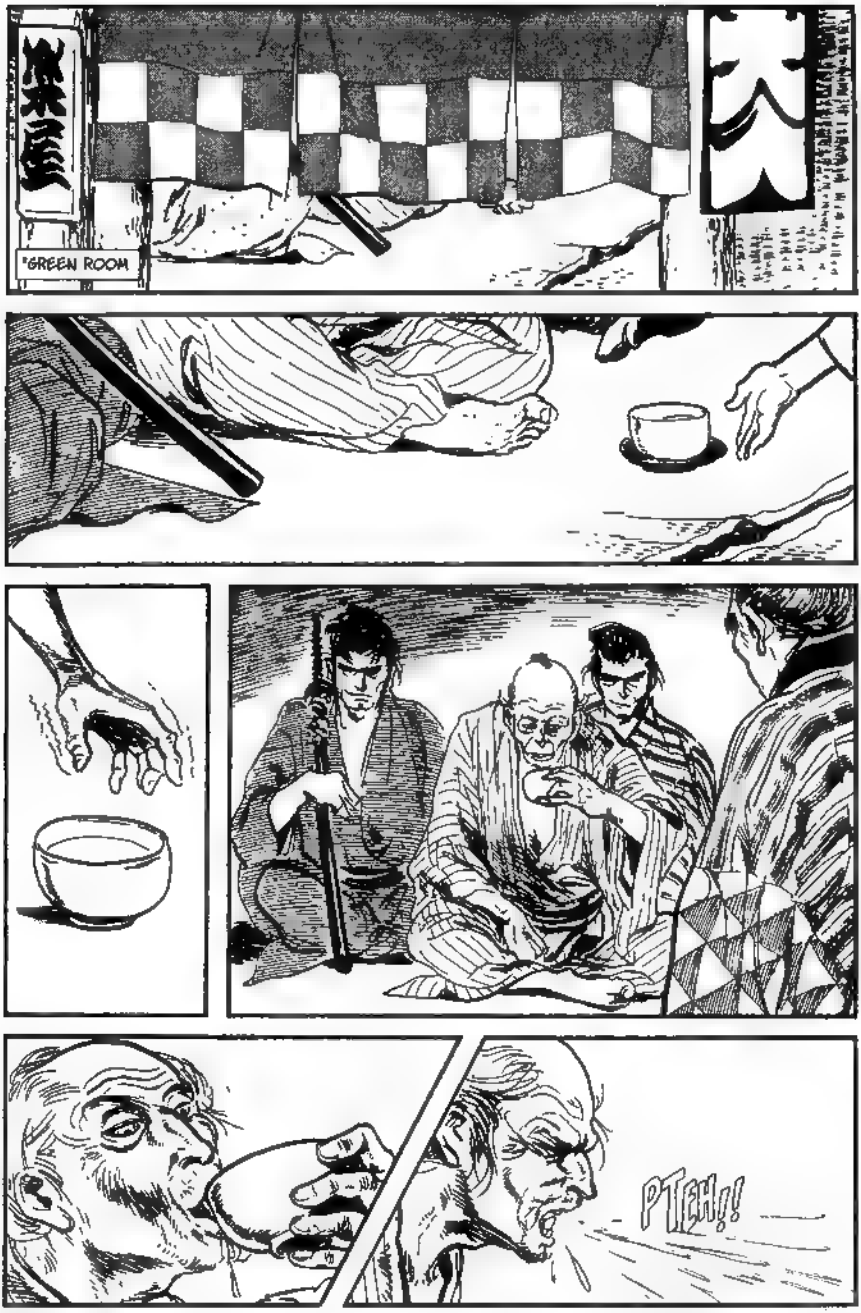

"MAGIC SHOW
THE HŌYA SHOW:
PRINCESS MAGICIAN
NOROWJI HŌYA



AH. ?
UM. EXCUSE ME?
S-SIRS! THE ENTRANCE FEE. ?
HEY, PAL. YOU REALLY WANTA MAKE KAPPA MASA PAY?
K-KAPPA MASA?!
=urrp!= HEH HEH HEH!
TELL YER OYATA I'LL SAY HOWDY AFTER I GIT A GOOD LOOK-SEE.
=nic=


WATCH AS I WIND THIS PIECE OF PAPER *TIGHT*.
BEND THE TIP *JUST* SO.
AND SLIP IT *GENTLY* INTO THIS *VERY* HEAVY JUG.
IF I CAN *LIFT* IT, MAY I HAVE SOME *APPLAUSE*?

THERE WE ARE!
KLAP KLAP KLAP


GREEN ROOM
PTEH!!

TEA?!
DON'T YA GOT NO SAKE?! USE YER FRIGGIN' BRAINS, DAMN YA!
F-FORGIVE ME.
WHAT THE FUCK'S THIS?

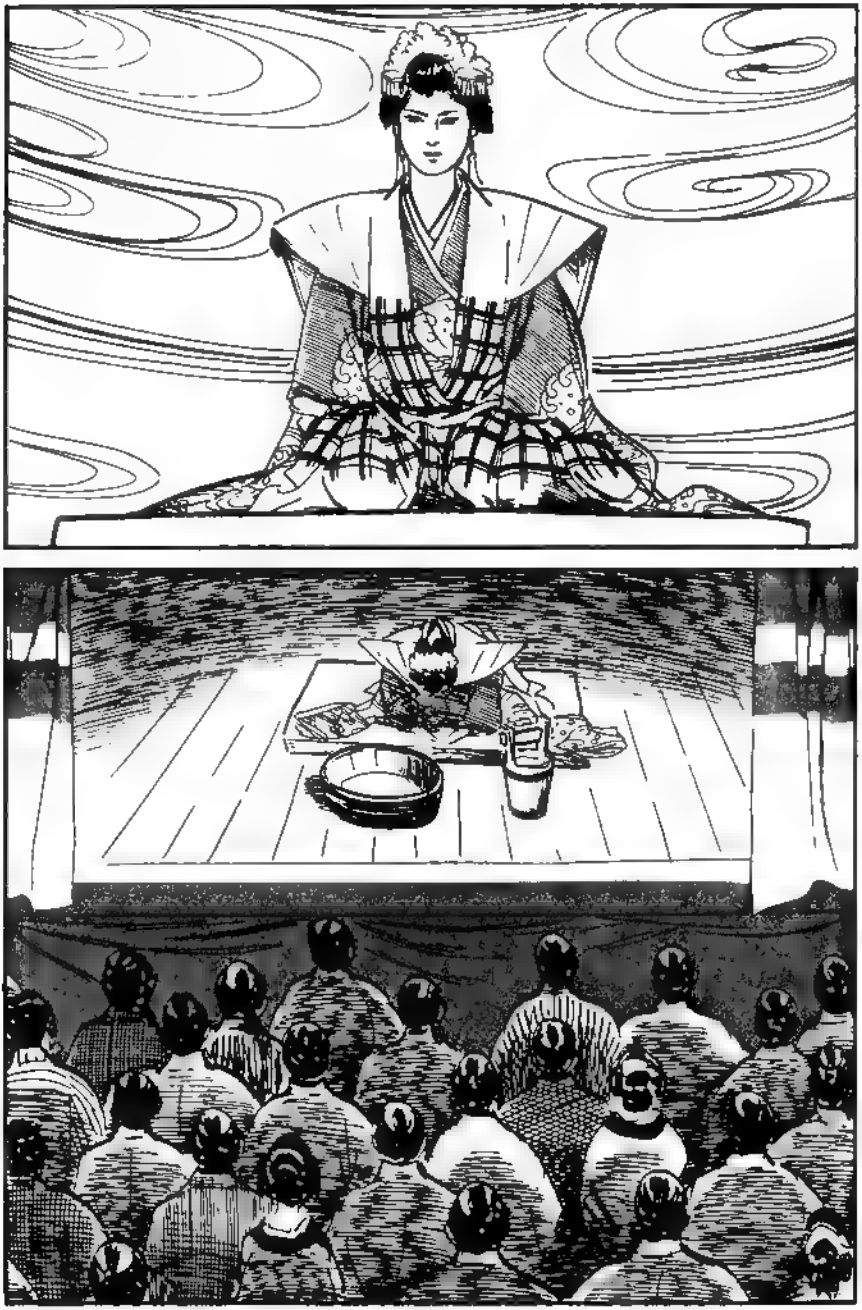
WE DIDN'T COME HERE FOR PENNY-ANTE HANDOUTS, PAL.
YEAH! YOU GOT A TEN-DAY RUN. THAT'S GOTTA BRING IN TEN RYŌ, EASY! A THIRD OF YOUR TAKE, THAT'S WHAT WE'RE ASKIN'
BUT THAT'S WE CAN'T!!
TOUGH! DO IT, OR OLD MASA HERE'LL RUIN ALL YOUR TRICKS, AND YOU CAN JUST PACK UP TOMORROW! DO THE MATH, PAL—HEH, HEH!

WE'LL PAY NOTHING!
THAT'S HOW MUCH YOU'LL GET!
WHAT?!
K-KŌYA, ARE YOU SURE ABOUT THIS...?
TRUST ME, OYATA.
I AM NORONJI KŌYA.
WE SHALL PAY YOU NOTHING NOW. GO AWAY

DAYŪ DON'T YA KNOW ABOUT KAPPA MASA?
I KNOW ALL ABOUT HIM.
ONCE HE WAS THE MOST RESPECTED MAGICIAN IN ALL EDO, A MASTER CREATOR OF MAGIC TRICKS.
THERE ISN'T A MAGICIAN ALIVE WHO DOESN'T LIVE OFF HIS CREATIONS.
I AM NO EXCEPTION.
BUT THAT MASTER OF INVENTION, REVERED BY US ALL, WAS DESTROYED BY ALCOHOL AND GAMBLING AND NOW HE'S THE PITIFUL KAPPA-NO-MASAJIRO, DESTROYING HIS OWN CREATIONS TO EXTORT DRINKING MONEY
THEN YOU DON'T CARE WHAT HAPPENS?!
I TOO, AM A MAGICIAN I HAVE MY PRIDE IF HE CAN SEE THROUGH MY MAGIC, I'LL PAY FOR IT WITH MY LIFE!

WHAT?!
AND IN EXCHANGE, IF HE CAN'T BREAK MY MAGIC, I'LL PUT OUT HIS EYES!
IS THAT ACCEPTABLE TO YOU?
YEAH! I LIKE IT! WE'LL TAKE THAT BET!

DAYU! YOU'RE GONNA LOSE MORE THAN YOUR LIFE.
WE'RE TAKING OVER THIS WHOLE OPERATION, YOUR EARNINGS, EVERYTHING! OKAY BY YOU?
YES.
SAKE! WHERE'S MY SAKE!
:hic!:
:ufrP:

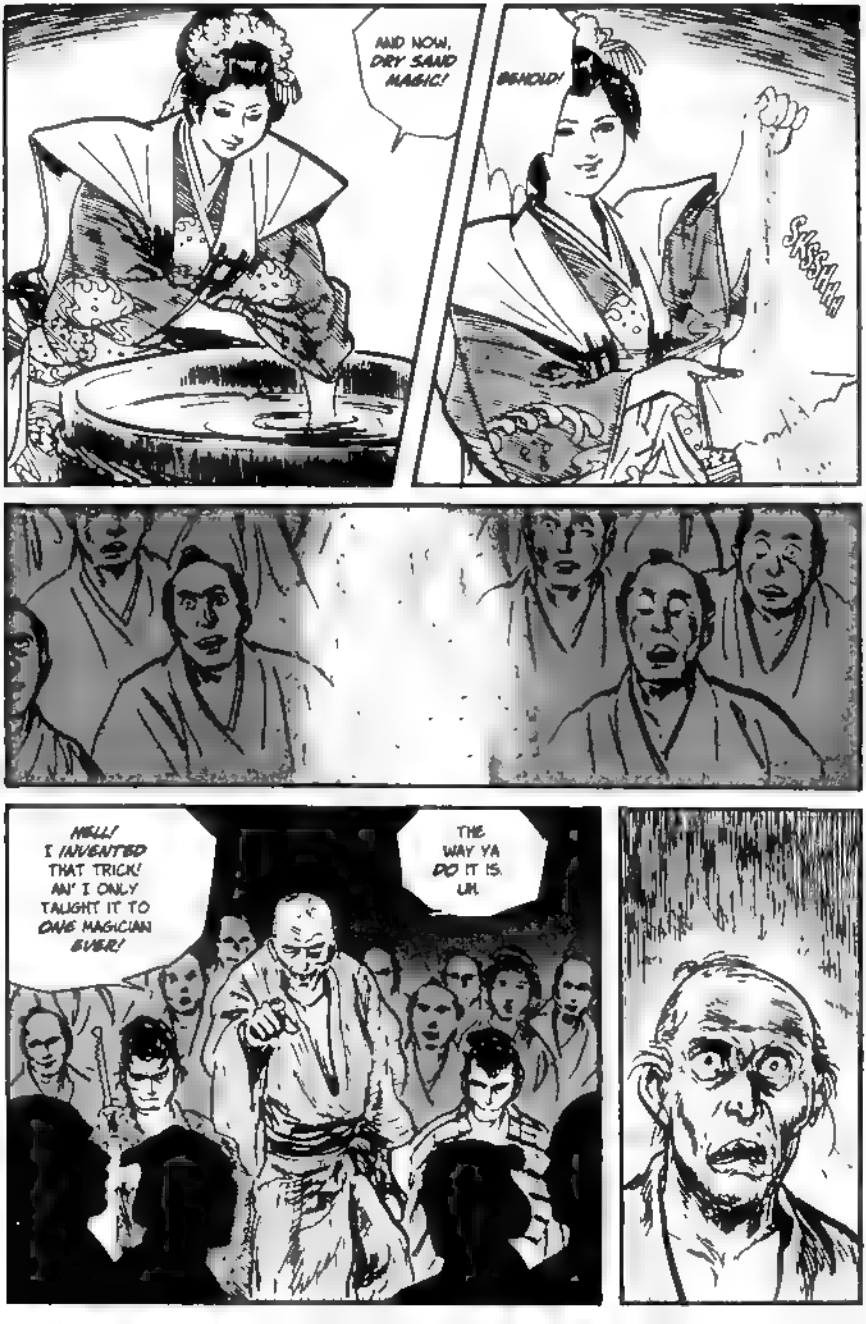


I SHALL NOT REVEAL THE *TITLE* OF THE MAGIC TRICK YOU ARE ABOUT TO *WITNESS*.
IT IS A *SECRET* AMONG *SECRETS*, MAGIC *NEVER BEFORE REVEALED* TO THE EYES OF THE *WORLD*
...AND A TRICK *NO* OTHER MAGICIAN CAN *PERFORM*

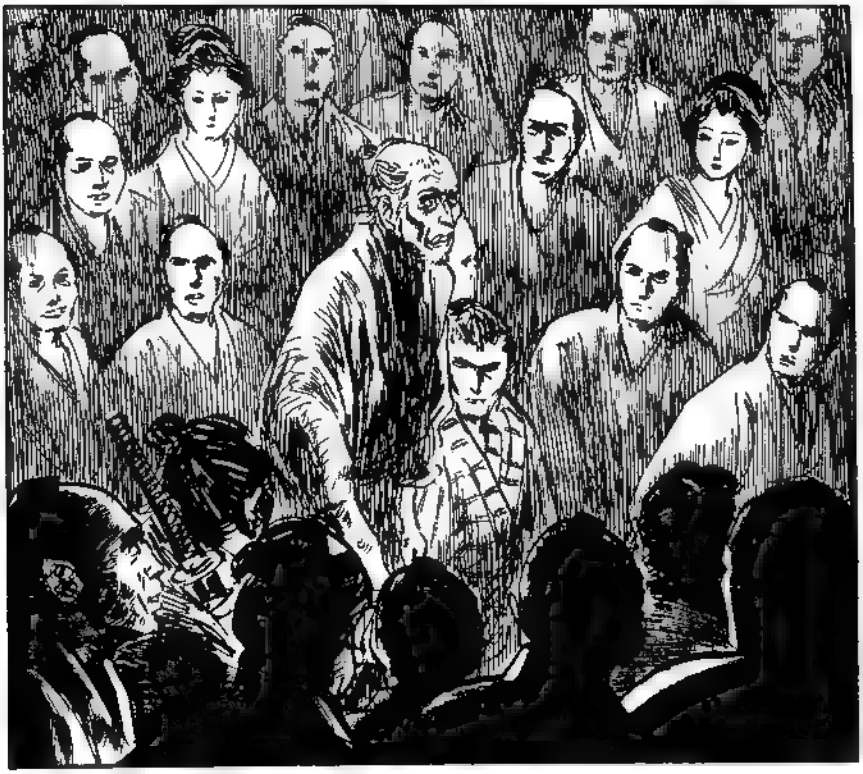
FEAST YOUR EYES!
KLAP
KLAP
KLAP
WE'RE COUNTIN' ON YA, GRAMPS. THIS IS THE BIG ONE.
WE GET THEIR BOX OFFICE AND THEIR WHOLE DAMN SHOW!
HEH, HEH, HEH. NOT TO MENTION THAT TASTY MORSELS HOYA HERESELF
THERE AIN'T A TRICK IN THE WORLD OLD MASA CAN'T BREAK! IT'S AS GOOD AS OURS.
GRAMPS, WE'LL GIVE YA MORE GOOD SAKE THAN YOU CAN DRINK! JUST MAKE HER!

SPLSH
AH, LITTLE ONE! I SEE YOU'RE HERE AGAIN TODAY— WILL YOU HELP ME ONCE MORE?
KLAP
KLAP
KLAP

AS YOU CAN SEE, THIS IS SAND— NOTHING MORE
KSSSSH
I SHALL NOW POUR THIS SAND INTO A BUCKET FULL OF WATER, AND HAVE THIS YOUNG GENTLEMAN STIR IT FOR US.
HEH HEH HEH. THE "DRY SAND" TRICK, IS IT? DON'T EVEN GOTTA WATCH
HEH, HEH!
chic
READY? POUR IN THE SAND AND STIR IT ALL UP
SKNSSH
SPSH
SPSH


AND NOW, DRY SAND MAGIC!
BEHOLD!
SHSSHH
HELL! I INVENTED THAT TRICK! AN' I ONLY TAUGHT IT TO ONE MAGICIAN EVER!
THE WAY YA DO IT IS. UH.

I. . JUST TAUGHT IT.
TO... TO ONE. .
WHAT'S WRONG, GRAMPS? HURRY UP AND TELL THEM!
HEY! MASA?!



YOU..?
ARE
YOU?!

GRAMPS, C'MON! WHAT'RE YA DOIN'! YOU SAID YA KNOW IT!
N-NO. I I DON'T
WHATTY
I DON'T KNOW. I KIN'T FIGURE IT OUT!
FWIP
NOW AS PROMISED I SHALL HAVE KAPPA MASA'S EYES!
THE HELL YA WILL!

DON'T MESS WITH US!
EEEK!
AIIEE!
DIE, BITCH!!
SHUKK
GRKK!

UH-
WHO THE FUCK?!
SHNNNG
WAGYAAH!

FWOO
IF YOU'D REVEALED THAT TRICK, I WOULD HAVE BITTEN MY TONGUE OFF AND DIED! GLADLY!
YOU WOULD HAVE MURDERED YOUR WIFE, AND YOUR DAUGHTER!
ONE SNOWY NIGHT, AFTER YOU'D ABANDONED US, MOTHER TOOK ME IN HER ARMS, JUST SEVEN YEARS OLD AND FLUNG HERSELF INTO A RIVER!
WHEN THEY PULLED US OUT,
I

I... WAS THE ONLY ONE THEY COULD SAVE. SIXTEEN YEARS AGO.
EVERY YEAR I'VE THOUGHT, WILL I MEET HIM? THIS YEAR AT LAST? IT'S ALL I'VE LIVED FOR.
SHIMA ? DEAD AND DRAWNED?!
HRK...!
DRINKIN' TO FORGET...
BUT REMEMBERIN' THE MORE I DRANK. MISSING YOU. ALWAYS, ALWAYS.
NOW! I'LL HAVE THOSE EYES!
TH-THAT'S MY QUEST! MY ONLY QUEST!
....
GO ON! TAKE 'EM! F IT'S BY YOUR HAND, I'LL. I'LL..

FWSST
NNG!
F-FATHER!!
HOYA
MY DAUGHTER

LONE WOLF AND CUB BOOK TWELVE. THE END
TO BE CONTINUED

GLOSSARY

bangashira
Commander of the guard

bushi
A samurai. A member of the warrior class.

bushidō
The way of the warrior. Also known as *shido*.

cho
1 Approximately 300 meters
2 Even numbers

daimyō
A feudal lord

dayū
Maestro. ' A term applied to musicians and other stage performers. Many performers in Japan take stage names, and name inversions were also common in the entertainment industry.

Edo
The capital of medieval Japan and the seat of the shōgunate. The site of modern-day Tokyo.

fukumi-yari
A telescoping spear, the segments collapsing into one another.

haiku
Traditional short verse, with a 5-7-5 syllable pattern.

han
1 A feudal domain
2 Odd numbers

hanshi
Samurai in the service of a *han*

honorifics
Japan is a class and status society, and proper forms of address are critical. Common markers of respect are the prefixes *o* and *go*, and a wide range of suffixes. Some of the suffixes you will encounter in *Lone Wolf and Cub*:
chan – for children, young women, and close friends
dono – archaic, used for higher-ranked or highly respected figures
san – the most common, used among equals or near-equals
sama – used for superiors
sensei – used for teachers, masters, respected entertainers, and politicians

jōdai
Castle warden. The ranking *han* official in charge of a *daimyō*'s castle and *han* when the *daimyō* was in residence in Edo. Often the *jodai* was also the senior elder, or *karō*, of the *han*.

kaminaga
A mature woman. Literally, "long hair."

kuge
Aristocracy. Members of the imperial court in Kyoto.

kurokote
Gauntlets bound with iron plates.

meifumadō
The Buddhist Hell. The way of demons and damnation.

meishu
A village chieftain. In Edo Japan, a select handful of *meishu* were assigned official duties by the *machi bugyō* (Edo city commissioner) and local *daikan* (magistrate). Peasants were forbidden to bear arms and had no family names, but these select few were given special dispensation to wear a sword and pass down their family name.

metsuke
Inspector. A post combining the duties of chief of police and chief intelligence officer.

mon
A copper coin.

origami
Literally, "folded paper." The art of making figures from single sheets of folded paper.

oyabun
The boss of a *yakuza* gang. Literally, "father status." His underlings were known as *kobun*, or children.

oyata
The head of a troupe of performers.

rōnin
A masterless samurai. Literally, "one adrift on the waves." Members of the samurai caste who have lost their masters through the dissolution of *han*, expulsion for misbehavior, or other reasons. Prohibited from working as farmers or merchants under the strict Confucian caste system imposed by the Tokugawa shōgunate, many impoverished *rōnin* became "hired guns" for whom the code of the samurai was nothing but empty words.

ryō
A gold piece, worth 60 *monme* or 4 *kan*.

ryū
Often translated as "school." The many variations of swordsmanship and other martial arts were passed down from generation to generation to the offspring of the originator of the technique or set of techniques, and to any *deshi* students that sought to learn from the master. The largest schools had their own *dōjō* training centers and scores of students. An effective swordsman had to study the different techniques of the various schools to know how to block them in combat. Many *ryū* also had a set of special, secret techniques that were only taught to school initiates.

sankin kōtai
The Tokugawa required that all *daimyō* spend every other year in Edo, with family members remaining behind when they returned to their *han*. This practice increased Edo's control over the *daimyō*, both political and fiscal, since the cost of maintaining two separate households and traveling to and from the capital placed a huge strain on *han* finances.

Sanzu River
The Japanese equivalent of the River Styx. On their way to the afterlife the dead must take boats across the River Sanzu.

sekisho
Checkpoint regulating travel from Edo to other parts of the country. All travelers had to submit papers at official checkpoints along the main highways in and out of Edo.

seppuku
The right to kill oneself with honor to atone for failure, or to follow one's master into death. Only the samurai class was allowed this glorious but excruciating death. The abdomen was cut horizontally, followed by an upward cut to spill out the intestines. When possible, a *kaishakunin* performed a beheading after the cut was made to shorten the agony.

shinan
Chief instructor.

shiraha-dori
The Yagyū technique of "naked blade capture."

shōgi
A Japanese board game with rules similar to chess.

sun
Approximately 3 centimeters.

tegata
Official travel pass for transiting *sekisho*.

tsubo
The traditional cry at the start of a dice game. The dice man shows the customers that the cup is empty.

KAZUO KOIKE

Though widely respected as a powerful writer of graphic fiction, Kazuo Koike has spent a lifetime reaching beyond the bounds of the comics medium. Aside from co-creating and writing the successful *Lone Wolf and Cub* and *Crying Freeman* manga, Koike has hosted television programs; founded a golf magazine, produced movies, written popular fiction, poetry, and screenplays, and mentored some of Japan's best manga talent.

Lone Wolf and Cub was first serialized in Japan in 1970 (under the title *Kozure Okami*) in *Manga Action* magazine and continued its hugely popular run for many years, being collected as the stories were published, and reprinted worldwide. Koike collected numerous awards for his work on the series throughout the next decade. Starting in 1972, Koike adapted the popular manga into a series of six films, the *Baby Cart Assassin* saga, garnering widespread commercial success and critical acclaim for his screenwriting.

This wasn't Koike's only foray into film and video. In 1996, *Crying Freeman*, the manga Koike created with artist Ryoichi Ikegami, was produced in Hollywood and released to commercial success in Europe and is currently awaiting release in America.

And to give something back to the medium that gave him so much, Koike started the *Gekiga Sonjuku*, a college course aimed at helping talented writers and artists — such as *Ranma 1/2* creator Rumiko Takahashi — break into the comics field.

The driving focus of Koike's narrative is character development, and his commitment to character is clear. "Comics are carried by characters. If a character is well created, the comic becomes a hit." Kazuo Koike's continued success in comics and literature has proven this philosophy true.

GOSEKI KOJIMA

Goseki Kojima was born on November 3, 1928, the very same day as the godfather of Japanese comics, Osamu Tezuka. While just out of junior high school, the self-taught Kojima began painting advertising posters for movie theaters to pay his bills.

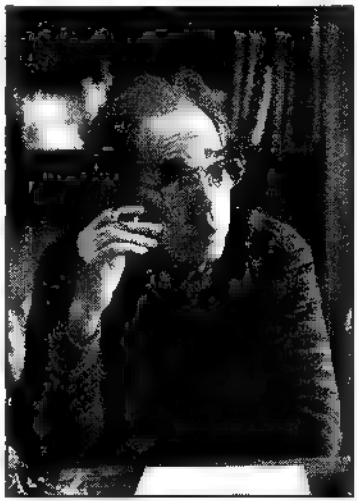
In 1950, Kojima moved to Tokyo, where the postwar devastation had given rise to special manga forms for audiences too poor to buy the new manga magazines. Kojima created art for *kami-shibai*, or "paper-play" narrators, who would use manga story sheets to present narrated street plays. Kojima moved on to creating works for the *kashi-hon* market, bookstores that rented out books, magazines, and manga to mostly low-income readers. He soon became highly popular among *kashi-hon* readers.

In 1967, Kojima broke into the magazine market with his series *Dojinki*. As the manga magazine market grew and diversified, he turned out a steady stream of popular series.

In 1970, in collaboration with Kazuo Koike, Kojima began the work that would seal his reputation, *Kozure Okami* (*Lone Wolf and Cub*). Before long the story had become a gigantic hit, eventually spinning off a television series, six motion pictures, and even theme-song records. Koike and Kojima were soon dubbed the "golden duo" and produced success after success on their way to the pinnacle of the manga world.

When *Manga Japan* magazine was launched in 1994, Kojima was asked to serve as consultant, and he helped train the next generation of manga artists.

In his final years, Kojima turned to creating original graphic novels based on the movies of his favorite director, Akira Kurosawa. Kojima passed away on January 5, 2000 at the age of 71.



THE RONIN REPORT

By David S. Hofhine

The Dotanuki Sword of *Lone Wolf and Cub*

I have been working full time as a professional *togishi* (Japanese sword polisher) in the United States for nine years, and I have been a fan of *Lone Wolf and Cub* since the first English translations were published by First Comics back in the late 1980s. I would like to offer some general information regarding the Dotanuki sword depicted in the series.

Throughout the various English publications of *Lone Wolf and Cub*, Dotanuki has been referred to as a type of sword, the name of a specific sword, and perhaps a sword smith. I would like to put to rest the confusion if possible. The type of sword used by Itto Ogami is called a *katana*. This is a curved sword over 60 cm in length. It is worn through the belt, cutting edge up. This type of blade came into widespread use during the middle of the *Muromachi* period (1392-1572) and is the Japanese "samurai" sword best known to this day. The *katana* has a shorter, straighter, and heavier blade than the

older style *tachi* sword of the *Kamakura* period. These changes were made to make the blade faster to draw by an unmounted samurai. The shorter, heavier blade was also more effective against the heavier armor of the day.

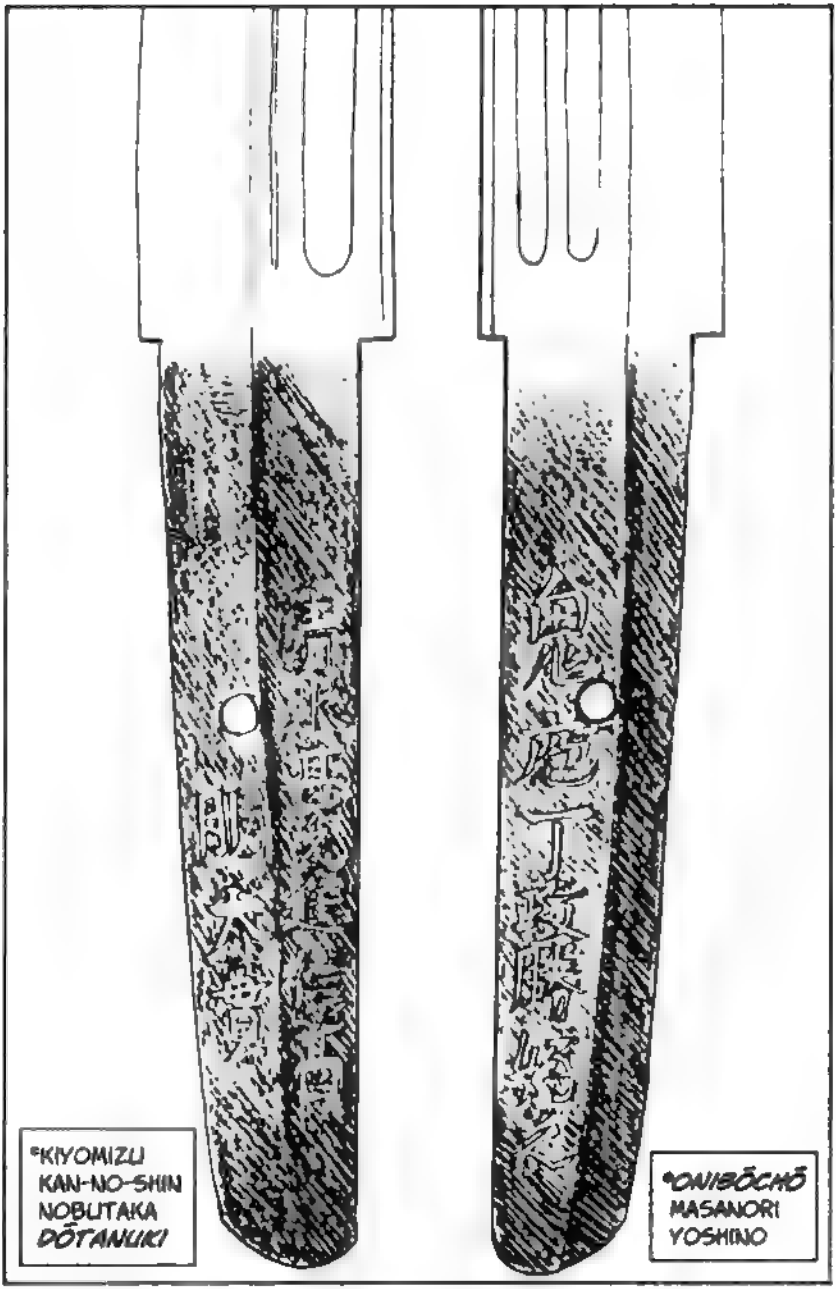
There have been many famous "named" blades throughout Japanese history: *Kogarasu-maru* ("The Little Crow") and *Hocho Masamune* ("Masamune's Kitchen Knife"), for example. The Dotanuki blade of Itto Ogami does not appear to be one of these "named" blades. Rather, it seems to refer to the historical Dotanuki school of sword smiths. Koike and Kojima, being excellent students of Japanese history, must have been aware of this reasonably well-known and respected group of sword smiths.

The Dotanuki school of sword-making was based in Higo province on the island of Kyushu. It was most active during the late 1500s and early 1600s. Dotanuki school work draws heavily on the Yamato tradition of sword-making. The school featured many smiths who signed the name Dotanuki to their swords along with other information about where and when the blade was made. A typical *mei* (*tang* signatures) would include island, province, school, and personal names, such as: Kyushu Higo Dotanuki Hyobu. The Dotanuki

school blades were very sturdy and designed to stand up to heavy use. Their early *katana* are described as rustic, inelegant, and massive, with their greatest asset being their cutting ability.

After the unification of Japan under the Tokugawa shogunate, a period of relative peace came into being. This is known as the Edo period (1600-1867). During this time, the arts flourished and swords became more elaborate and decorative. There was a trend in some sword-making schools toward aesthetic appeal over functionality as their samurai clientele became more affluent. This was the case with many of the swords being produced in Hizen province, a neighbor of Higo province. The Hizen blades of the Edo period were very graceful and refined, but they were also known for their thin skin steel. In time, the skin steel would polish through, revealing the rough iron core and weakening the blade. To this day, Hizen blades are prized by collectors for their beauty and dreaded by polishers for their thin skin steel. The early Dotanuki school blades, in contrast, remained dedicated to material application above all.

In the pages of *Lone Wolf and Cub*, Koike and Kojima do provide us with an interesting bit of evidence as to the origin of Itto's Dotanuki. In Volume 5, page 158, we find an *oshigata* (paper drawing of a


*KIYOMIZU
KAN-NO-SHIN
NOBUTAKA
DŌTANUKI
*ONIBŌCHŌ
MASANORI
YOSHINO

blade or a portion of a blade) representing two swords. The blade on the left, presumably Itto's sword, is signed Kiyomizu Kan-no-shin Nobutaka, Dotanuki. The first two *kanji* (old-style Japanese calligraphy characters) used to spell out DO TAN UKI, however, are different than the *kanji* used by the actual Dotanuki school of sword smiths. Furthermore, there is no record of a smith by the name of Nobutaka ever working with the Dotanuki group.

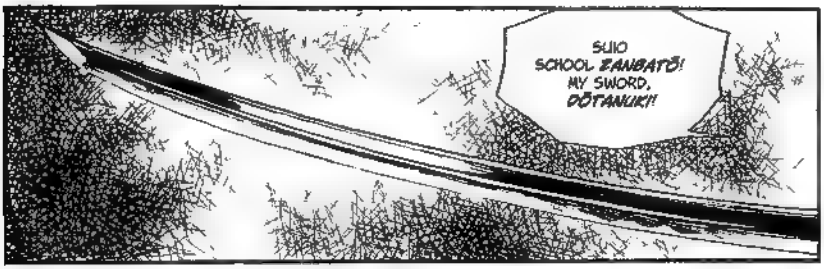
There was a famous line of smiths named Nobutaka that ran for ten generations from 1573 to 1865, but they were based in Owari province halfway across Japan and never signed Dotanuki. Of this Nobutaka line, one smith did indeed sign with the same *kanji* as shown in the right-hand column of this panel. This signature was used by the tenth and final generation of the Nobutaka, but this smith worked almost 150 years after the events of *Lone Wolf and Cub*, so this could not be the smith who forged the Lone Wolf's Dotanuki. Out of more than 30,000 recorded sword smiths, the tenth-generation Nobutaka is the only one ever to use these exact *kanji*.

Koike and Kojima obviously took some artistic license in their rendition of the tang inscription of Itto's Dotanuki sword. They must be forgiven for this, as these blades are incredibly rare nowadays. Even a reference to this group of smiths that includes

pictures of what a typical *tang* signature should look like is extremely hard to find.

It is my conclusion that the Dotanuki sword used by Itto Ogami in the *Lone Wolf and Cub* series must have been based on the reputation of the historical Higo Dotanuki sword-smith group. When it is referred to as "Dotanuki" or "a Dotanuki," the authors are referring to the smiths that made it and the qualities typified in their work. The dates and description of a stout, heavy blade, made for serious cutting, match perfectly. The concept of sword-makers remaining loyal to the tradition of making strong, functional blades during a period of extended peace is a perfect metaphor for Itto's dedication to the code of *bushido* in what is illustrated as an increasingly lawless and corrupt world.

Referring to Itto's Dotanuki is like referring to someone's Colt in a western novel. The gun's "name" is not "Colt," nor does it indicate one specific type



of gun such as a pistol, rifle, or shotgun. It would, however, be understood by the reader that the gun in question would be the type associated with cowboys and gunslingers, the type used in the "quick-draw" and "showdown." Similarly, Dotanuki is neither a specific blade's name nor a particular type of sword blade such as a *tachi* or *katana*. It is, rather, a reference to a sword made by a specific historical group of sword smiths who were dedicated to producing serious battle swords with a primary concern for cutting ability.

These are conclusions I've reached based on my own research. I hope this information has been somewhat interesting or helpful. If you would like more information on Japanese swords or sword polishing, please feel free to visit my website at *www.swordpolish.com*.

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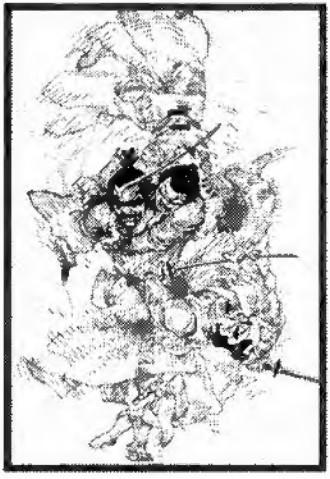

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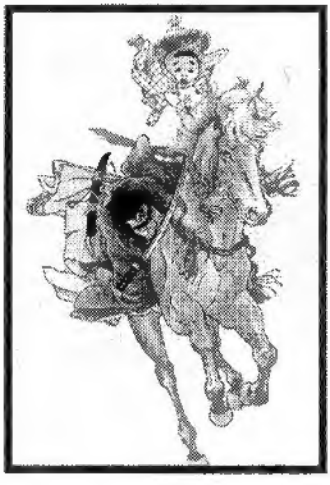

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